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"Forbidden."

By HELEN F. HETHERINGTON,

Part Author of "PAUL NUGENT, MATERIALIST," "NO COMPROMISE,"

"LED ON," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE LAW ALLOWS IT!

IF there had been more light Beatrice would have seen that Geoffrey Talbot, though dressed in the latest fashion, according to the cut of his frock coat, and with a flower in his button-hole, looked very unlike his usual self. His face was white, his lips trembled, and he seemed to be suffering from such an inward perturbation of feeling that he could scarcely act with any sort of conventionality. He never explained that having told Simmons that he knew Lady Falconer was "at home," he passed in so quickly that he gave him no time to stop him, and so ran upstairs, without being announced. Also that he had had the grace to knock, but receiving no answer had ventured to come in. He was so full of all that he had just heard and of his own object in coming, that he stood there without apology or excuse, with just control enough over himself to prevent him from catching hold of one of those little hands lying idly in her lap, and covering it with kisses.

She wondered why he did not speak or shake hands, and asked him to light the standard lamp, as they were not going to hold a dark séance. He pulled a silver match-box out of his pocket, and lighted it, as he had often done before, but he only turned it up now to give a very subdued radiance, which he felt to be appropriate for the occasion.

"Won't you sit down?"

He brought a low chair close beside the sofa, as if she were deaf

and would not be able to hear him. As he sat down, his foot touched the copy of "Audacity" which was lying on the floor, and with sudden revival of energy, he gave it a savage kick which sent it flying across the room.

Beatrice was beyond feeling surprise at the moment. She could scarcely collect her thoughts sufficiently to make the simplest attempt at ordinary conversation, and she sat there, quite still, waiting for him to say why he had come, or where he was going, with no definite interest in either. She was not even conscious that his eyes were devouring her face with growing excitement, as he marked the signs of suffering upon it. There were his violets in her dress, showing that his offering had been kindly received, and they seemed to give him the one touch of encouragement that he needed. With the remembrance of her wrongs nearly maddening his brain—he broke out abruptly, "I know all about it," and then waited breathlessly to see the effect of his words. The light of the lamp fell softly on her delicate face, disclosing the dark shadows under her eyes, the melancholy droop in her gentle mouth, bringing out the fairness of her beautifully rounded throat against the violet velvet of her dress. His heart went out towards her on a wave of pity and admiration.

"They all know it," she answered with intense bitterness. "I'm told that I am the laughing-stock of London."

"The laughing-stock—God forbid," he exclaimed fervently, and then he leant forward, and looked straight into her downcast face with a frank appeal in his eyes.

"Don't pity me!" she said hurriedly, "I can't bear it—indeed I can't."

"I don't want to have to pity you." Could he dare to go on? Could he risk everything and tell her what was seething in his brain? He might offend her so mortally that she would never let him come near her again; but on the other hand, his passionate devotion might have the power to touch her. He looked round the room desperately. In the dim light, and the deep silence there was something that drew him irresistibly on. Such a golden opportunity would never come to him again. He would be an absolute fool not to use it. He took his courage in both hands, as the French say, and asked hoarsely, "May I be very bold?"

"Just as you like," she answered in a level tone of perfect indifference. "I am as callous as a stone."

Scarcely an encouraging response, but having begun he had to go on, and the strength of his feeling carried him through. "You've had enough, God knows, to make you so," he said earnestly, "but I've come to ask you to put a stop to it."

"I should rather like to do it, if I could," she said dryly, her eyes still looking at the fire or the floor, as if she had not the energy to raise them.

"There is only one way—give him up—cast him off—and be free!" breathlessly.

"Impossible!"

"As easy as possible, on the contrary. Think what it would be to be free! Oh, Lady Falconer," his voice deepening as his heart throbbed fast, "you can't guess how I've *longed* for your freedom!"

"Not quite as much as I," she said in a low voice, with a sudden catch in her breath.

"More—ten thousand times more," he insisted vehemently. "I've thought of you, dreamt of you, night after night—as free, free to be loved as I've loved you always—free to be won as I hope to win you, as soon as that cursed ring is off your finger."

She raised her eyes and looked him full in the face, meeting his passionate glance with one of intense reproach. "*This* from you!"

He bent over her, eager, passionate, devoted.

"Couldn't you love me if you were free?" he asked with his most winning smile.

"It is scarcely like a gentleman to insult me when I am down—down as low as I can go," she said slowly, but with a sudden flash in her eyes.

"Insult you—good God!—nothing was further from my thoughts," his cheeks whitening as he winced. "I only said when you were free—I—"

"I never shall be free—till I am dead," she interrupted him quickly.

"Never?" he echoed drearily, as the light went out of his face—"you won't take your chance, and get rid of him—when you can?"

"When I can't," she corrected.

"But the law allows it," he said eagerly. "And if there ever *was* a case—"

"The Church forbids it."

"The Church?" he repeated as if he hardly understood what she

meant. "The Church made this marriage which has spoilt your life. Let her undo it as fast as she can. There is no time to be lost. It is wearing you out. Every time I see you I find a difference. It will kill you if it goes on," he said hotly.

"I wish it would—and be quick about it too," she rejoined, meaning it with all her heart.

There she sat in all the pride of her youth and her wonderful beauty—a young girl—more beautiful as he thought than any other—and yet the only thing left her for a wish—was death—to die like the old and worn out—to die like the starved or the stricken—to die like a miserable failure, for whom life has neither promise nor hope. The thought drove him wild.

"You will die for the sake of an idea—when you might be free as the wind in a few months. Think of it," he implored. "I'm not half good enough for you, of course—but at least I shall know how to love you, and take care of you—and keep straight for your sake, and you shall have your own way from morning till night."

"I don't doubt it," and her face softened as she saw his burning eagerness, and knew that she must chill it. "You would be kindness and devotion itself—but don't you think you had better choose another topic? You forget whose house you are in, and that you are speaking to the owner's wife."

He started to his feet, flushing hotly. "Would to God he were dead!" he cried fiercely, feeling ready and eager to carry his wish into execution at the moment.

She got up from the sofa, and leant wearily against the mantleshelf. "I cannot listen to you any longer."

There was nothing for it but to go, and go he must, but how could he go—when he would have to carry with him this heavy sense of loss wherever he went? There had been no exaggeration in his words. Beatrice had been the object of his fairest hopes ever since their last meeting at Ethelred Hall. When the reports grew worse and worse as to her husband's misdoings, he consoled himself with the thought that the Earl was making it easier for his wife to get rid of him. He was of an ambitious turn of mind, though to most of his friends he seemed to be nothing better than a social butterfly, and he meant to be an Ambassador long before old age robbed him of the power of enjoyment. And what a wife for an Ambassador Lady Falconer would make, with her air of distinction

and her unrivalled beauty. He had revelled in this thought with a constancy that surprised himself, and other women lost their power of fascinating him, because he was always comparing them to their disadvantage with the ideal close hidden in his heart. And now he could think of this no more! It was all over—there was a blankness in the future which bewildered him, and which seemed to be waiting for him as soon as that door would close behind him.

He looked at her hesitatingly—her head fell down upon her hands as they rested on the mantle-shelf in an attitude of utter dejection. Then for the first time he realised the extent of his own cruelty. He had been talking to a prisoner condemned to penal servitude for life, of the inexpressible delights of freedom—conjuring him to go out and enjoy them to the full, when he knew that the door was locked, and the window barred. And his words must have seemed like the most heartless mockery! She was tied to this brute by a chain which she considered unbreakable, and he had urged her to set herself free! Could anything have seemed more wantonly cruel? The grace of her attitude was perfect, but he longed to see it altered. The small dark head with its rich coils of hair still rested on her hands, and she neither moved nor spoke. Every insignificant sound in the room, of ticking clock or falling coal, became an aggressive noise. He longed to throw his arms round her, and draw her close to his breast; and the longing grew almost irresistible in the pregnant silence. Surely there must be some answer to his love in the secret corners of her heart. It could not be absolutely thrown away!

"Beatrice!" he uttered her name as softly as he could—and then drew a deep breath.

The door opened, a voice said respectfully, "I beg your pardon, my lady—I thought you were alone."

A child dressed in velvet and lace ran into the room with unsteady steps, and eager outstretched arms, "Mummy! Mummy!" he cried in his fresh young voice, and caught hold of his mother's dress with his chubby hands.

Beatrice started—it was as if all her softer instincts had been brought into new life by her child's electric touch. She raised her head quickly, and kneeling down by the child on the rug, clasped her hands fondly round his small form, kissing him passionately; and as the light of her great love broke over her face, and shone

out of her eyes—Geoffrey stepped back involuntarily. There seemed to be no longer any place in that room for him.

A minute later he was outside on the damp pavement, with the chill November fog shrouding the street, and blurring its familiar outlines into a strange unlikeness of their usual shape—with a still denser fog in his brain, leaving all that had happened in the last quarter of an hour an indistinct memory of trouble.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CLUB CHATTER.

CAPTAIN PEMBERTON was a delight to his brother officers, because, for two years or more, he only applied for most sparing allowance of leave. Month after month, he stayed up at Aldershot, seeming to take a strange pleasure in the dull routine of "duty" which absolutely amazed them. The others fled up to London on every possible pretext, inventing moribund relations or newly engaged sisters, in order to obtain leave for fictitious funerals or weddings. They talked of Aldershot in the winter as next-of-kin to Siberia, in summer as an Anglican Sahara—distinguishing features—dust and thirst. Pemberton was a puzzle to them, for no one had a key to his conduct. They could not guess that this comrade of theirs, who was as far removed as possible from being a pious bore or a morose misanthrope—a man who made such an excellent half-back at football, who took such interest in sport, and in all kinds of athletic games, was putting himself voluntarily under a stern rule of self-discipline. This consisted in keeping away from any place where he was likely to meet Lord Falconer's wife. He was convinced that this amount of self-denial was necessary for his cure, and he stuck to his purpose with meritorious persistency—making Beatrice think that he had forgotten her, irritating his uncle beyond expression, offending friend after friend by refusing invitations—and slipping out of the memories of many heads of society who might have been useful to him in his future career. At last he imagined that the cure was effected, and that he had gone back to that unemotional, fraternal state of feeling which had made his intercourse with Betrice Kennard so safe, as well as so pleasant.

As a first step, he wrote to ask for another photograph to replace the one that he had lost at Ethelred Hall. At first he had almost been content to be without it; but now he persuaded himself that it would be better to accustom his eyes to the charms of her likeness before he ventured to look on her own living self.

Beatrice sent him the last that had been taken, without a word, hoping that a marked silence would be more effective than a letter. It was one of Mendelssohn's most successful pictures, giving all the grace and charm of the original, as she looked back over her shoulder in the conventional attitude, but with a look in her large eyes which haunted Hugh all through the night—and drew him up to London whether he would or no. What an awful amount of misery she must have been through, before those eyes, which used to laugh and sparkle as if all the fun in the world were gathered up into them, could have gained that broken-hearted expression!

"I've been nothing more nor less than a selfish brute!" he said to himself with a sharp pang of remorse, and he sent in his application for leave at once.

He had no fear of being refused, so began to make his preparations for departure without loss of time; and next day his eagerness sent him up by such an early train that he was obliged to go to the club for an hour because it was much too soon for him to appear at Clifford House.

As he sat in an armchair pretending to read the telegrams in the Times, and gaining no information from them because of his pre-occupied mind—two young men standing in the window, and carrying on a continual flow of gossipy chatter, began to lower their voices to that peculiar pitch which not only attracts, but compels attention.

"What's up with Geoff?"

"Fancy there's something wrong."

"You know his style—'Come all you fellows—dine at the old place—and see me off.' Nothing of the kind this time. He cut it as quietly as a burglar with his swag."

"And what *was* his swag? I believe I've spotted it," with a chuckle—the two heads went closer together evidently over something especially spicy.

"Beauty didn't show up at Stafford House. Perhaps—mind I only say *perhaps*—she has given Beast the slip."

"Great Scott, that *would* be a howler!" with a grin of exquisite delight. "Make the Beast sit up!"

"Not a bit of it—he wouldn't raise a hair. But I should. She's too fine a thorough-bred for the bolting business—too fine by half."

"I'll leave a pasteboard in Curzon Street just by way of a feeler, see if I don't," the other replied with a knowing wink.

Hugh started from his chair. It *was* Beatrice that these two inanities were discussing as coolly as if she were a well-known member of the demi-monde! Good Heavens! was nothing sacred to them!

In an instant he was close behind them. He knew them both slightly, and they turned round in friendly fashion to greet him, but the look on his face stopped them. His manner was quiet—his voice cautiously lowered—but his eyes blazed.

"I am going to lunch with the lady you have been discussing so delicately," he said coldly. "Would you like me to tell her of the interest you take in her movements?"

The two boys—for they were little more—broke out into eager explanations, but Captain Pemberton cut them short without mercy. "Don't mention her again without proper respect," he said fiercely, anger getting the better of prudence, "unless you want your heads punched," and walked straight out of the room. They looked after him with flushed faces, and the younger, to hide his confusion, laughed derisively.

"Gone on her himself, plain as old Harry," he said in order to get rid of his uncomfortable feelings. He knew that he was in the wrong, and he might not have objected to confess it; but it was insupportable to be told that he was so by somebody else.

"Don't be an ass," rejoined his friend. "There's real grit in Pemberton—and he couldn't do less than speak up for her—as he knew her in pinafores—so they say."

"That's a dodge as old as the hills. There's Forrester. Bet I'll run him down before he gets to the corner, see if I don't."

Whilst the two friends were hurrying after a third, Hugh Pemberton was walking towards Curzon Street with long strides, his blood boiling as he thought of the words he had overheard. He knew that Lord Falconer's misdoings were the current gossip of the clubs, but that his wife should be dragged into it seemed nothing short of sacrilege. To think that two beardless boys should have

the audacity to speak of her as if she were on the same platform as *Fifine of the Opera Bouffe*! It was monstrous. And for fear of a row, he could not even knock them down, but was obliged to leave them untouched to grin behind his back, because he had given them an unexpected rebuke. It was maddening to have his tongue tied by the fear of compromising the very woman he was trying to save from misconstruction; but no one knew better than himself, that if a man, who is no relation to a woman, takes upon himself to defend her with more than customary warmth, he can scarcely do her a greater injury. His wrath was still in a state of fermentation, when he reached the Falconers' door. He opened his eyes wide when Simmons drew aside a curtain, and prepared to usher him up an unfamiliar staircase.

"This is some new arrangement," he ventured to remark, but the only answer he got was that her ladyship found it convenient, and the next minute he was shaking hands with Beatrice, and reading his welcome in her eyes.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SKATING ON THIN ICE.

BEATRICE was so delighted to see Hugh Pemberton that she could not treat him with the coldness that he seemed to deserve. "I thought you had wrapped yourself up in soldiering to such an extent that you hadn't a thought to spare for your friends," she said with a smile.

"I've gone in for the thing thoroughly—a man gets double the interest out of his work if he understands it," he answered sedately, as his eyes travelled over her face and figure till they came to a stop at her hand. How thin it had grown since he last touched it!

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," she quoted as she stirred the fire

"If you find me dull, I'll go back again."

"No, I must keep you here to brighten you up, or you will get beyond my powers. Do you know, you are the most refreshing thing I've seen for centuries!" looking up at him, with frankly admiring eyes as she leant back in her chair.

"Your sarcasm is too withering."

"I mean what I say—you haven't been to the Park—you can talk of something else than Lady Blank's bicycle, or the new American Cinderella."

"Which means that I've been away for so long that I'm out of the swim altogether," he said, trying to be as steady as the Monument.

"Yes, thank goodness!" with a sigh of satisfaction. "You won't bore me with the 'Advanced Woman,' or the 'Go-ahead Daughter,' and you won't tell me, like a juvenile Duke did the other day, that 'Woman's Rights' began and ended in the captivation of man."

"He was quite right, I daresay."

"Was he? I don't agree with him. Then there's the frivolous fool who measures my conceit by his own, and gives me a diet of compliments. The theosophist, who finds the truths of Christianity too misty, so he invents a thick fog, and gropes about in it with enthusiasm. He wanted me to grope too, but I said I had never suffered from too much light, so artificial darkness had no charms."

"You must come across some queer characters," Hugh remarked, feeling sure she was talking so fast to ward off dangerous questions.

"I do, indeed. The bumptious atheist tries me most. The effrontery with which he goes about with a bandage over one eye, seeing only one side of the question, and calling us fools because we can see both," she said, disdainfully, as she remembered a certain Professor, with whose cold conceit she had come into contact.

"It is a great art to see both sides of a question, but embarrassing when a quick decision is wanted."

"In crossing the street, for instance," she put in with a smile, "Flo would be dead and buried by this time, if it weren't for those nice, decided policemen."

"Undecided, flabby morality produces the profligate; flabby Christianity, the atheist; flabby government, the anarchist."

"And flabby friendship?" she asked, with great significance.

"There is no such thing," he said, promptly.

"Only half-an-hour ago, I thought there was."

"You didn't really?" he asked, in a hurry.

"How could I help it?" looking straight at him, in a way that was trying to his powers of self-control. "You were the oldest friend I had, and you quite forgot me for months and months."

"I know it—I know it," speaking in a short, terse way, as if he were jerking out the words with some difficulty. "But you make a huge mistake. I never thought of you more." Then he got up and stood by the fire, and added, lamely, as he played with the ornaments on the mantel-board. "But I had other duties to see after."

"Then don't *think* of me next time, but come," leaning forward and speaking with sudden eagerness. "Till Flo arrived, I was the loneliest being in the world. Crowds about me on every side, but not one single friend that I could trust."

"You might have sent for me," still studying a queer little statuette of a boy turning head over heels, as if he were immensely interested in the interrupted somersault.

"Not I!" she exclaimed, with decision. "If you chose to stay away, you could—just as long as you liked."

He turned away from the mantel and its ornaments, as if he had braced himself to meet the enemy's fire, and sat down in a low chair just in front of her.

"You won't get rid of me in a hurry—now I've come," he said, in a matter of fact tone, though his pulses were fluttering. "I've any amount of leave—and I place myself at your service. Make all the use of me you can."

"That is delicious," her eyes shining with pleasure. "Flo! only, fancy!" as Miss Vivian came into the room, in her hat and jacket and stood transfixed with astonishment, one hand upholding the plush portière, as if she were almost afraid to enter. "Here's the deserter come back to be court-martialled. What shall we do to him?"

"Arrest him at once—and don't let him go in a hurry," she rejoined, with celerity; and then, as she shook hands with the offender, she looked up into his face with her laughing blue eyes, and told him that she was awfully glad to see him, but she didn't know why, as he *was* such a wretch!

They were very cheerful over their luncheon, and Beatrice laughed now and then in her old hilarious fashion, a fact noticed by Simmons as well as by James, one of the footmen. If she had told anyone what an intense pleasure it was to her to have this dear old friend with her once more, that individual would have been convinced that Lady Falconer would do well never to see him again. But Beatrice thought herself entirely heart-whole. She had been sated with

passion in her husband's case—love she was disgusted with—and at twenty-two all she asked for—was friendship. Geoffrey Talbot had ventured beyond the boundary, and he was lost to her at present—perhaps for ever; but Hugh Pemberton was safe within the limits, and she felt certain he would never over-step them.

She felt as free as air at present, because her husband was safely out of the way in one of the Northern Counties. That is to say, she was free as to her movements in town, but she was not allowed to go down to St. Christophers. Falconer told her that her father supported her in her constant rebellion against his authority, so that he never meant her to stay with him again. If she wanted change, there was the Grange which had belonged to his family for centuries. To which she replied with spirit (not having developed as yet into the saint-ship that Millie had prescribed as her fitting apotheosis), that the Grange had the dust and the dulness of centuries upon it, and was only fit for a madhouse or a penitentiary. She might be an eligible inmate for it if she lived with him much longer, but she was not anxious to go before her time had come. As to whether she went to her father's or not, that would depend on the way in which he treated her.

"A fine example of wifely obedience," he sneered.

"Why should you expect the third part of the vow to be kept, when you have made the two former impossible," she asked, with flashing eyes.

"'Pon my word, you are a cool hand! You will go any lengths after that. I must keep my eyes open."

"Don't you understand me yet?" she cried, in a tone between exasperation and agitation. "You know, as sure as you stand there, that I should keep straight if I had a blind idiot for my husband."

"One never knows—but I'm not blind, and I've a head on my shoulders, so I only advise you to be careful," with a knowing nod, that irritated her beyond expression.

"You would trust me, you know you would," she said, facing him with a challenge in her eyes.

She was determined to draw a confession of his confidence out of him, but he was equally bent on aggravating her by withholding it.

"Just as far as I can see you—not one inch further," he said, slowly.

"That is a cram, and you know it," she said, hotly.

He looked at her oddly. He had heard a whisper that she was preparing to divorce him; and it had always been his theory that no woman would wish to get rid of her husband, unless she had a lover to fall back upon. As a matter of fact, and quite independent of his own will, he had trusted her implicitly up till then; but now it seemed to him against common sense to believe that there was no one waiting in the background, ready and eager to step into his shoes, and probably urging her on.

"Women are all alike," he said, with his horrid smile.

"They are as far apart as East and West, and there is a line drawn between us—and those others," she said, as she tossed back her head disdainfully, and her lip curled, "that no temptation would induce *us* to pass."

"Talk, talk; but all I can say is: I shall wait and see," and that was the only answer she could extort from the man who was her husband, and ought to have known her thoroughly.

No wonder that she turned with eagerness to the old friend who would have doubted the evidence of his own eyes, sooner than lose one particle of his faith in her; no wonder that her poor troubled heart opened out to him like a flower to the sun. Pickles took to him more than to anyone else, and would clamber on to his knee in order to thrust sticky chocolates under his fair moustache. Hugh swallowed the much bethumbed chocolates without making a wry face, and allowed himself to be victimised, with a patience that made Flo declare that "Job wasn't in it." Sometimes when the boy drew his dark brows over his black eyes, in a sudden fit of passion, he shuddered as he thought of the curse of heredity. What happiness would there ever be in life for his mother if he grew up a prey to all the inherited vices of his father? And then the child would laugh up in his grave face with the inconsequent laughter of happy childhood, and the fear would vanish like a ghost before daylight, and he would toss him up into the air above his head, before depositing him, to the accompaniment of a crow of delight, on his mother's lap. And Beatrice would bend over her boy, with that tender smile of motherhood irradiating her face, and he would say to himself, "what did it matter if the child had a devil for his father, if his mother were like an angel fresh from Heaven?"

Lord Falconer still lingered in the North, and Hugh Pemberton,

from the best of motives, fell into the seductive habit of dropping in upon his old friend in Curzon Street. He always came with his pockets full of toys or caramels for Pickles, and he generally devoted most of his conversation to Flora Vivian when she was not otherwise engaged; but there was not a word, a look, or a movement of Beatrice's, that escaped his notice, and the fascination that she had so long exercised over him grew stronger and stronger, in spite of the steadiness of his resistance. He quieted his conscience by telling himself, as thousands of men have done before, that she was in desperate want of a brother, and that as nature had not provided her with such an article, the oldest friend she possessed was bound, by the most sacred duty, to act towards her in that capacity. He escorted the two girls to the theatre, to the Park, to picture galleries, or even to bazaars, with an entire disregard of anything beyond their convenience or expressed desire, to which the most attentive brother that ever lived would never have risen; and he kept to himself the exultation which made the blood bound in his veins, at the mere sight of Beatrice sitting in her accustomed chair, her lovely face upturned to greet him with the smile that never failed. He was skating on the thinnest ice, and he knew it, but what did it matter if he drowned alone without dragging anyone else down with him? He forgot that the ice might hold a temptation for one who was tired of long, dreary waiting on a snow-covered, slippery bank.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A MATCH BETWEEN ATHENIANS AND ASHFORD VILLANS.

THERE was one game into which Hugh Pemberton always threw himself with all his heart, and that was football. As soon as he found himself in his old place in the field, every trouble vanished from his mind, and he was sure to play with the enthusiasm of a schoolboy. As centre half-back, more than an average portion of work generally fell to his share; and he had gained a reputation in the Athenians as one of the best tacklers, or surest kickers, amongst the amateur exponents of the game. As quick of eye as he was of foot, he had snatched manifold victories from the grasp of his opponents by his dashing play at some critical moment.

A Saturday afternoon, late in November, was fixed as the date of the long talked of match between the Athenians and Ashford Villa for the Charity Cup; and public excitement gathered strength as the event drew near. There is always a spirit of rivalry between amateurs and professionals, so that the keenest interest was felt at the approaching trial of strength. The Athenians, mostly recruited from old public schoolboys, are known to be hard to beat, with plenty of pluck and determination to carry them through an up-hill game, but the Ashford Villa men—a team composed entirely of professionals, are also said to be “hard as nails,” and they had a long enough list of victories to their credit to prevent their opponents from crowing too confidently.

November was kind enough to provide them with a fine day, free from rain, frost or fog, and the fair sex, who are to be kept away from nothing in these days, except, perhaps, prize fights, appeared in unusual numbers. There was a large contingent of players from other teams, who had purposely refrained from making any fixture for that date. They watched the game with closest attention, and nothing in the way of a slip escaped them; but to do them justice, they were just as prompt with their applause as with their disapprobation, and sent up a rattling cheer when any of the players did anything to distinguish themselves. Beyond them was the crowd, impartial and critical, making no difference between amateurs and “mere pros,” but showing a marked disposition to disagree with the referee, which was steadily ignored by either team. Between six and seven thousand people gathered together to see if the Athenians could hold their own against the “Villans,” and amongst them were Lady Falconer and Miss Vivian, and even Lady Crosby, occupying places in the pavilion, who understood just about as much of football as they did of Sanscrit, and were prepared to agonise over every charge and fall, as if death and destruction were being dealt on every side.

Beatrice would have frankly confessed to anyone but her prejudiced husband that Hugh Pemberton was her chief attraction; but Flora omitted all mention of Val Forrester, who happened to be a prominent member of the Athenians, and only admitted a general fondness for all athletic games; whilst Lady Crosby, if in one of her honestest moods, would have owned to a desire to get up a ladies' team, in order to gain that impossible thing—“a new emotion,” if she found that football was practicable.

She was accompanied by Baron Varicourt, whom she had kindly abstracted from Beatrice's train in place of the kidnapped Major. His ambition was to seem as much like an Englishman as possible. He spoke our language with creditable accuracy, and swaggered down the streets of Vienna in a coat from Bond Street. He talked of "creeket," as if he took the greatest interest in the subject; and football was a mystery which he did not object to studying, if the weather were propitious, and he were by the side of a pretty woman. The broad-shouldered, frank-faced Austrian, accustomed to the ceremonial of one of the strictest Courts in Europe, was much amused at his present unconventional position with the "Great Unwashed" all around him. He imagined that any amount of thieves, socialists, anarchists and ruffians, of every sort might be amongst them; whilst Society, as represented by the smaller section of ticket-holders, had about half-a-dozen policemen to take care of her.

"You English have small regard for your own safety," he remarked, after a look round. "Fewer men of police than I can count on my fingers, and a crowd as numerous as the population of a small town."

"Yes; but the crowd is here to look on at a game—not to make an insurrection," Millie rejoined, with unruffled placidity. She could be as arrant a coward as anyone else on the smallest opportunity, but as she saw no opportunity at present, she made no effort to take it.

"You have a better place than any of those rough fellows in the background."

"But I paid for it—or somebody else did."

"That is scarcely a reason why they should not wish to take it from you."

"They may wish as much as they like, but they can't do it," she said, with a shrug of indifference and an impatient glance towards the men's pavilion.

"What is to prevent them? Six policemen and I?"

"Yes, and quite enough. We English can keep ourselves in order. You foreigners have no order in you, except under the frown of a *gendarme*."

The baron laughed. "You are a wonderful people, madame; but how long will it last?"

"My time—I hope," with that frank selfishness for which Millie

was distinguished. She was growing dissatisfied, because nobody had noticed "the duckiest hat in the world"; and now that she came to think of it, she could not remember that any paper gave the fashions at a football match. Whatever had induced her to come? She was out of her element entirely.

"Here they are, Lady Falconer," Townshend-Rivers exclaimed, as the teams came streaming out on to the ground. "Pick out your man, if you can. I always think it's the most difficult thing in the world to spot any fellow amongst a team. They all look alike."

"There's Captain Pemberton," Beatrice said, confidently, as she fixed her eyes on a group of Athenians. "He is taller than any of the others."

Townshend-Rivers smiled. "That's Longmore, the best goal-keeper I ever came across. The man on the other side is a Goliath, but that's against him in stooping for the low shots. Won't you have something on? What shall it be? I want an umbrella badly. You back Athenians, of course. If they were the wretchedest players in England, it would be the same. A woman always backs her friends."

"Especially when they are going to win."

"Ashford Villa have been in brilliant form lately, so don't be too cock-sure. An umbrella against a muff-chain that the Villa wins?"

"You will have to buy an umbrella; you won't get one from me," she said again, with the supreme confidence that springs from ignorance.

"I've every chance of winning it. Whether I get it or not depends on a feminine conscience—about as much to be depended on as a Limited Liability business."

"They might have come and spoken to us," Flo remarked, in a tone of blank disappointment, as she saw the two Captains giving their final hints and suggestions to their men.

"Cricket is the game for opportunities, and that's why women adore it. At football the poor things are nowhere. A fellow can't be looking about him, when he has to get hold of the ball with a heavy man charging him at the same minute, or he may end by sending the ball at the girl's head instead of himself later on," Townshend-Rivers assured her.

She looked quenched for a few minutes, for it is not at all a satisfactory amusement to watch a friend in the far perspective when you have expected him to be in the near foreground.

Captain Pemberton had no thoughts for the lookers-on, as he ran over his men with a critical eye. He pronounced them to be clean, trim, and hard, with plenty of fighting power, and as he took his accustomed place as centre-half-back, with Val Forrester on the right wing, he felt that the Charity Cup was one of the near possibilities of the future.

(To be continued.)

Who Gave the Warning?

By WALTER RICHARDS.

CHAPTER I.

MISSING.

"THAT'S a nice boat, Desmond; how would that do?"

Three of us were holiday making in Norfolk—the land of Broads, and far landscapes, and glorious air, and fishing and shooting, and most other delights, and were standing on a certain staithe prospecting for a house-boat. By way of introduction, it may be mentioned that "we" were the Hon. Bertie Desmond of the Lancers, just home from Egypt, Frank Vane of the Foreign Office, and Richard Ferrars, the humble individual addressing you, who am ironically described by my friends as a man of leisure.

It was Vane who asked the question, and the suggestion seeming a good one I glanced at Bertie, expecting acquiescence. But to my surprise, after looking at the boat for half a minute, he gave a very decided shudder. I fancied he turned rather pale, and certainly he shook his head emphatically.

"Not if there was not another boat in Christendom. You fellows look surprised, but won't when you hear my reasons. We'd better wait before engaging a boat till we hear from my cousin—he'll probably put us on to something good. Meanwhile let's go for a row, get underneath the trees on that little island, and I'll tell you the story; then you will agree with me that truth is stranger than fiction.

"When I was about twenty," began Desmond, after we had

reached the desired haven, "I used to be a good deal in this part of the world, staying with an old tutor of mine, named Carroll, who had a small living not far from here. He was a dear old fellow, quaint, learned, and as simple as a child, a widower with an only daughter, and an old sister who lived with them. Lucy Carroll, the daughter, was the old man's idol, and no wonder, for a sweeter, prettier, more winsome girl it would be hard to meet. You needn't smile; I wasn't a bit in love with her, nor she with me: it sounds hackneyed I know, but we were like brother and sister, with a good deal more of genuine affection for each other than real brothers and sisters sometimes have. She was the life and blessing of the village, always helping and cheering someone—now assisting her father in his work, now, with tender cunning, consulting her aunt on some pretended difficulty, and brightening the sad, sensitive old heart by making her believe in her own usefulness and importance—now visiting the sick and poor, now teaching and playing with the children—always merry and good and bright.

One summer—I was not here at the time—a stranger appeared on the scene. He called himself Mr. Felix, owned a dainty, well found wherry—the very one you thought would suit us, Frank—and did things generally in good style. He was a remarkably handsome man, rather foreign looking, with great charm of manner, considerable erudition, and a fund of thrilling anecdote and experiences. Add to this the fact that he put in an appearance at church, and you may easily imagine that it was not long before he had formed acquaintance with the Carrolls. He charmed the old man by his interest and information in abstruse and antiquarian studies, won over Miss Carroll by his courtly deference and piquant talk of the great world, and Lucy—sweet, guileless Lucy—from the very first she was fascinated, enthralled, bewitched, and, scarce wittingly to herself, gave the priceless treasure of her warm, loving heart to this stranger. The year before that she had had a bad accident, and was nearly drowned—would inevitably have been, had I not happened to be in time. I have sometimes thought since it would have been far better, according to our lights, had she then been taken. Such at least was afterwards the constant wail of her wretched father, when, raving and heart-broken, half doubting in his madness the God whom he had taught and served, he passed away moaning into the darkness—beyond it, as I humbly believe, to meet his child again in the light.

The acquaintance with Mr. Felix soon ripened into intimacy. He was constantly arranging excursions and picnics, and at last persuaded Miss Carroll and Lucy to come for a sail in his wherry. I heard afterwards that the first time Lucy entered the gorgeous little cabin, she shuddered and put her hands to her eyes. But it was no mysterious premonition of ill; it was only at a picture, exquisitely painted, which hung against the side of the cabin door. It was called "A Martyrdom" and represented, with hideous realism, the slow fiendish torture of a woman. I have seen it since, and understood what she, pure soul, could not, the suggested meaning underlying it, and betraying itself in the gloating satyr face of the executioner. Felix exhibited great annoyance at sight of her distress; it was painted by an old master, he said, and the property of the former owner, which he had been asked to keep for a time; he himself hated it; unfortunately it was fixed to the panelling, but it ought to have been—and was forthwith—covered up. And so the trip proceeded pleasantly, Felix from time to time whispering impassioned love speeches to the trusting, loving girl, to whom he had become, as Faust to the poor ruined Marguerite, her "king of men." There was only one sailor on board, a sort of half caste, deaf and dumb, and apparently half witted in all outside his calling.

I must hurry over what followed. A week or so later Felix announced that he must go to meet a friend, and would be away two or three days. The day after his departure Lucy went to pay a long promised visit to some friends at Winterton. She never reached there, and from that day forward was never seen alive.

In two or three days Felix returned. He was shocked and bewildered at the tidings, immediately communicated with the police, wired for detectives and was indefatigable in searching with them every conceivable place for miles around.

In the midst of this state of consternation, I arrived, to find my sister playmate vanished, and my old friends stunned with grief—the light of their eyes taken from them, their house left unto them desolate.

CHAPTER II.

A HIDDEN CLUE.

I NEED not tell you what a shock the news was to me. I did not of course stay at the Rectory, but I could not leave the neighbourhood. Poor old Carroll was quite broken down when I saw him: "Find her, Bertie, find her. She was so fond of you. Oh, my Lucy, my little Lucy." And over that bent grey head I made a vow that I would not cease from the quest, would take no pleasure nor needless rest, and would spare neither money, nor thought nor labour, till the hideous mystery was unravelled.

Of course I soon met Felix, and at once recognised his charm of manner and appearance. Nevertheless, I conceived an intense dislike to him—why, I could not have explained to myself, as he overwhelmed me with politeness and attention, naturally flattering to a young fellow of my age. I accompanied him and the detectives on some of their expeditions, and was at first struck by the cuteness and determination he exhibited. But all search was unavailing, and with that piteous wail ringing in my ears: "Find her, Bertie, find her, she was so fond of you," I determined to investigate on my own account.

Lucy, it appeared, had arranged to walk to the station on the Eastern and Midland line, from which she would take the train to the nearest village to Winterton, her trifling luggage being sent by carrier. Exhaustive enquiries had been made of the railway people, and it was certain no ticket for the journey had been issued that day. It seemed, therefore, as if the explanation of the mystery must be sought along the road between the Rectory and the station. It was known that she had started on this road; it remained to be ascertained at what point she had quitted it. The opinion of the police and Felix was that, tempted by the beauty of the day, she had thought she would walk the whole distance. I doubted that; Lucy was not particularly fond of walking, and, as I gathered her friends had a garden party in the afternoon, it did not seem likely that she would wish to arrive there heated and tired. I set out one morning, starting at the time she had done, and adapting my pace to what I remembered of hers. I tried to put myself in her place, and to notice the things that she would have noticed. But no inspira-

tion or vestige of a clue occurred to me, and when I had covered half the ground I felt very hopeless. About midway the road passes the old ruin you noticed, Dick, and the idea suddenly occurred to me to look over it. Lucy and I had frequently been there, and it was just possible the girl might have turned off, and gone there to rest and look at the view. I had seen that view often enough, but never before-to-day had I noticed how near the river ran. At that particular hour of the day—the same according to my theory at which Lucy would have visited the ruin—the sun shone clear upon it, and lighted up the sail of a passing boat, till it shone like cloth of gold. In a moment the thought flashed into my mind, what if Felix had happened to be passing in his wherry when Lucy stood there. They would be quite near enough to recognise each other, and then—

"Preposterous," I said to myself, "I'm getting melodramatic in my dislike of the man. He was probably far away, and as to Lucy there was no shadow of proof that she ever came there."

Was there not? Even as I said the words my heart gave a sudden leap, and then stood still, and a swift throb rose in my heart, and my eyes grew hot and dim, for there at my feet lay a little carved cross, a worthless thing such as boys make out of coconut shell, which, years before I had made, and got mounted and had given to her, and which she always wore. I do not care to trust myself to tell you, even now, what my feelings were as I held the poor trumpery trinket in my hand. It was utterly illogical, I know, but from that moment something told me that Lucy was dead. I fought with the feeling, and tried to keep myself from believing it, but all to no purpose. Beyond all my arguments and self rallyings, and mental appeals to common sense, and determined assertions of confident hope, there sounded in my inmost heart a dreary persistent monotone: Dead—Dead—Dead—like some

"Set slow bell that seems to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever looked with mortal eyes."

Near where I was standing there was a breach in the old wall, and from it a grass track ran down to a little creek of the river. Along this I went, carefully searching for any sign that might indicate Lucy had passed that way. Not till I had reached the water's edge did I notice anything, but there, half hidden in the lush grass, lay a

withered cluster of jasmine, Lucy's favourite flower, and in the moist soil of the low bank was clearly discernible the marks of a boat's prow. Still searching, I found a half smoked cigar, which mechanically I took and deposited, wrapped up, in my pocket; then as I was turning to go, my glance fell upon a sharp snag of a root which projected from the bank, close to the keel mark. Looking more closely at it, I observed that its bark was splintered, and that on the white wood were two or three shales of dried paint. The boat had evidently received a nasty graze. Carefully detaching the fragments of paint I put them in my pocket-book. In colour they were of a somewhat vivid olive green, and a hazy conviction forced itself on me, that somewhere lately I had seen paint that colour. Nothing further was to be seen, and I turned back. As I did so, I heard a rustling in the little copse to my right, and half fancied I saw a man's figure disappearing between the trees. I did not recognise it, or pay much attention to the incident, for my brain was throbbing with the conviction that at last I held in my hands the thread of a clue, and I wanted to get back to my inn and think it out. I scarcely dared admit to myself the direction in which it seemed to lead, but one thing I was determined on—let it lead where it would, I would follow it till I found Lucy Carroll, alive or dead.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE TRAIL.

By the time I was quietly sitting in my room with my *pièces de conviction* before me, the inevitable reaction began to set in. Here was I imagining myself a Vidocq, or a Sherlock Holmes—though now I come to think of it, the latter gentleman was not then known to fame—and on what grounds? A withered buttonhole, which any girl might have dropped, a cigar end which was absolutely unsuggestive, and some flakes of paint, which might belong to half a dozen boats, and which certainly did not prove either that any girl embarked in one, or that that girl was Lucy Carroll. Boating parties by the score might have landed at that spot; nine out of ten girls might wear a sprig of jasmine; the same proportion of men might throw away a badly drawing cigar—and yet—and yet, after the cold fit had passed I felt sure that these signs and tokens *did* have the

meaning I had at first deduced from them. I looked at the cigar; the mouth end had not been bitten or cut, but pierced above the point by one of those little puncturing instruments—not common now, and less so then. The flakes of paint still suggested by their colour some vague association, but I was unable to localise it, while the faded flowers only awoke sad thoughts and painful fancies. I determined to ascertain if possible whether any of the Rector's servants happened to have noticed whether Lucy wore any, or what flowers, the day she left, and accordingly, calling ostensibly to enquire after Mr. Carroll, I made the enquiry.

Yes, one of the maids was sure she had worn flowers, she had chanced to see Miss Lucy as she went down the garden, and saw her pick something and put it in her belt: she could point out just where she stopped, and came with me and showed the place. It was at the entrance to a disused arbour, *which was covered with jasmine*. As I left the Rectory I strolled towards the staithe. Before I reached it I noticed two men were there, and I recognised both. One was Felix, the other was the figure I had caught a momentary glimpse of in the copse that afternoon.

Not caring to meet Felix just then, I turned back, but in a minute I heard him call my name. He had left his companion, and greeted me with his usual geniality, which I thought it wiser to reciprocate.

"Ah, Desmond, glad to meet you. I was just pining for some one sensible to talk to after another disappointing day. Which way are you going?"

"Back to my inn," I answered. "In what direction have you been to-day?"

"Oh, all about Winterton, and then on to Yarmouth, beating up a lot of people whom Joyce wanted to question. And it was all no good—all no good. And you?"

"I've scarcely been any distance," was my jesuitical answer. "I felt rather out of sorts, and kept in doors a good part of the day."

"You were wise. You're fresh in a way to this awful anxiety; we've most of us been knocked up over it. By the way, I wonder whether I can get any paint at the general utility shop here. My fool of a man has knocked some off the dinky."

I do not think my face betrayed anything, though as a rule a fellow of twenty is not much given to keeping command over his expression. At least I endeavoured to answer casually:

"I should think you could: if it's an ordinary colour, that's to say—what colour do you want?"

"Oh, it's common enough if they keep these things at all: the boat's rather a bright dark green—olive green I suppose they call it." I knew the man was looking at me, though he could not, I imagined, by any possibility suspect the meaning his answer had for me.

"I shouldn't think you'd have any difficulty," I answered. "But here we are at my hostelry. Come in and have a glass of wine or something."

Not quite the Arabian idea of hospitality, you'll say, but two things were absolutely essential: one was to prevent him having the least idea that I suspected him, the other to see if he would give himself away any more.

"My dear fellow, the offer's too tempting to refuse; I shall be delighted."

"I won't offer you a cigar," I said, when we were sitting in my room, "I'm expecting some down every day, and those of the house are awful, but here's some tobacco."

"Thanks, I've got my case with me; perhaps you'll try one of them?"

Fortunately I'd lighted a pipe; I didn't fancy, somehow, taking the fellow's weed.

"I've lighted up already," I said, "thanks all the same."

To my dismay Felix didn't seem to be going to smoke. You can easily imagine I was anxious to see his *modus operandi*.

"Aren't you going to smoke?" I inquired at length, "Capital thing after a bad day."

He looked at me with a queer smile for a moment.

"You're right," he replied, "I will. Ever seen these little things?" and he took from his pocket one of the instruments I mentioned and—still with that strange smile on his face—proceeded to operate upon the cigar.

"I'm rather a faddy smoker," he went on; "I always use this, and as often as not only smoke a cigar half through. Shocking extravagance, isn't it?"

I made some commonplace rejoinder. My voice to myself sounded unsteady, but Felix didn't seem to notice it, and we smoked for a minute or two in silence.

"By the way," he began at length, "I don't suppose there's

anything in it, but Joyce discovered a woman in Yarmouth at whose house a young lady had stayed. We couldn't get any description of her, but she had left behind a little pocket-book which the woman promised to send me. My man told me just now he had taken a packet on board. What do you say to coming with me, and looking at it together? Ten to one there's nothing in it, but it's a nice evening, and the air will do you good."

Nothing could have happened to suit me better. I had been thinking on what pretext I could invite myself on board, for there surely—if these accumulating evidences meant anything—might I expect to find some tangible proof of Lucy having been there. I assented readily, almost eagerly.

"That's right," he said heartily, "Come along. *Apropos*," he whispered, as we left the room; "don't say where you're going, for if Joyce's suspicions are correct, there are people in the village who know more than they should about the matter. You're coming to walk a little way with me—see?"

And with a smile and merry wink he went before me, calling out when we reached the door some observation confirmatory of the supposed arrangement.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MASK FALLS.

It was a dark evening, and most of the inhabitants of the village were attending some distant entertainment that had arrived, so we met no one during our walk to the staithe. The dingy was waiting—it was too dark to distinguish the colour, even if, after Felix's admission, that had been essential—and in a few minutes we were pushing off to the wherry, which lay well out in the water way. In a quarter of an hour or so we were on board, and Felix at once gave some directions to his man in the rapid sign language he employed, and which I could not have followed had I tried. As it was, I gave no heed; I was peering in every direction, hoping, rather unreasonably, I own, that I might see some traces of Lucy's presence.

"Pretty boat, isn't she?" broke in Felix's voice; "but there's not much to be seen by this light. I think it's turned rather chilly: let's go down to the cabin, and look into this mysterious packet left for me."

I agreed and followed him down into the cabin. It was a miracle in the way of luxury and comfort. There were numerous pictures—all I noticed of an erotic or sanguinary style, the latter especially being gruesomely realistic; silk hangings draped the walls, on which were crowded curios, costly mirrors and quaint cabinets, and the chairs and lounges were sumptuous enough for the most sybaritic of club smoking rooms. The table was a solid block, seven feet by three or thereabouts, in the centre of the cabin, the interior of which served, I noticed, for a cellarette.

"Let me give you some whisky, Desmond," Felix suggested, "the water is on the shelf by you, and I think there's a syphon, isn't it there?"

To refuse would have been unnatural, and would inevitably have aroused suspicion, so I let him pour some out for me, at the same time that he filled his own glass, and then I helped myself from the syphon he had indicated. To this day I do not know what hellish drug he used, but in a moment all power of movement and speech was taken from me, while sight and hearing and the functions of the brain became painfully active and clear. Opposite to me, sipping leisurely from his tumbler—the drug must have been in the aerated water—and with a mocking devilish smile on his handsome fiend's face, sat Felix.

"You fool!" he said presently, and there was a sort of serpent-like hiss in the gentle fascinating voice—"You miserable young fool! So you must needs go and try and find things out for yourself, and then fancied, precocious youth that you are, that you could hoodwink *me*—me! You'd have been more prudent to have let things alone, my friend: you're rather too clever to suit my convenience, and—

So wise, so young, they say, do never live long;

and I am afraid the adage will be verified in you. But there's no immediate hurry. The interesting little preparation to which you helped yourself with the soda water, won't lose its effect for three hours or more yet, and you're such an intelligent boy I'm sure you'd like to know what I'm going to do with you—the more so as you'll then solve the mysterious disappearance, as the papers call it, of your pretty companion."

I suppose my eyes must have expressed the rage and horror I felt, for he rose and placed his hand upon my pulse. Then with a

sneering smile he sat down again, and went on: "Quite safe, I see. Such wonderful speaking eyes you have, *mon cher*. I'll even tell you all about it. We are not likely to be disturbed; no one knows you are here. With your permission I'll light a cigar"—and he proceeded to use the little instrument I've mentioned.

"Tell-tale little things, these, aren't they? I'm afraid I must give them up. Queer chance your finding that stump; rather an unlucky one too for you, you'll find. Well, about *la petite Lucy*. She really quite captivated me with her pretty little saint-like ways, and when a woman captivates me, I invariably indulge my fancy. I knew the way she would walk that day, and made her promise that she would go to the old ruins, and look out for me, as there was just a chance I might be back. I didn't tell anyone else that, though. Well, the pretty fool came and waved her handkerchief, and strangely enough I happened to be waiting at the creek. Then I told her some suitable fairy tale—I think it was that my sister was on board—and persuaded her to come and have some tea. I gave her some bonbons I said I'd bought for her—I always keep them handy, ready prepared, *bien entendu*—and in a few minutes she was in the same pleasant condition in which you now find yourself. Ah!" and a look such as I've never seen before on any human face, and pray God I may never again see, came over his features.

"Well, there's no need to be too precise. I shewed her a few little pictures I've got—really interesting studies on the subject of female tortures, in which I'm a humble connoisseur—those big blue eyes of hers were nearly as expressive as yours, now I come to think of it—and so the time passed, more agreeably to myself than to her, I'm afraid. Then she had to go, but, inasmuch as I was sure she would make a ridiculous fuss which would be unpleasant for me, she had to go *my* way. This way effectually incapacitates one from committing any imprudence, and so I propose that you shall avail yourself of it, and follow *la chère Lucy*. I'll explain it. This table is really an ingenious piece of mechanism, and I'm quite proud of it. Let me move your chair nearer; that's right, now you can see comfortably. The inside you will observe is a cellarette. But that takes out, and the casing that remains can be hermetically sealed. It's just a nice size for a human body. Do you see those two valves at the bottom? Well, when the body is put in, and the top secured, I turn this little tap, which looks like a tray handle, and

presto! in comes the water. When the water has been in long enough—you understand me?—I pull this other handle, and the bottom of the tank turns, and by a simple little arrangement lets out anything that may be inside. Clever, isn't it? The bottom is closed again, the water runs off by a pump which works under this plank, the cellarette is fitted in again, and everything is quite comfortable. I always take the precaution to weight the body in case of accidents. And now I'm going to leave you here for an hour, while I go back to the inn, and enquire where you are! But you may count on my coming back to see you off safely."

He lighted a small spirit lamp, and put it close to me, the fumes of which had evidently the same paralysing properties as the drug, and left me, after locking the cabin door.

Picture to yourselves, if you can, my situation—helpless, alone, paralysed, in my heart a torment of rage and horror, and infinite grief in my brain, clear and distinct amidst a thousand thoughts and plans and memories, the knowledge that my span of life was measured by minutes, and that my death would be hideous beyond words.

Everything was perfectly still, save for the ripple of the water, and the gentle sough of the wind amongst the reeds on the shore—no, I remember, there was a clock which ticked my existence callously away, as it seemed to me, and the lines came into my mind:

"And in the dusk . . . the clock
Beats out the little lives of men."

A mirror was opposite me, and by the flickering light I caught sight of my reflection. I was sitting quite easily and naturally to all appearance, my face was not pale, nor did it show the slightest sign of the awful anguish I was suffering; anyone seeing me would have thought I was plunged in some reverie, and not an unpleasing one.

"Oh, God," I prayed, in my speechless agony, "send help, I beseech thee." And then, as if in immediate answer to my prayer, help came, but help so strange, so awful, yet so beautiful, that I never think of it without awe, humility, and deepest gratitude. Something prompted me to look again at that grim contrivance, soon to be my death chamber and tomb, as it had been Lucy's, and there—there, standing beside it, with one dear hand stretched out to me in aid, and a sweet smile on her winsome face—ah! my God—so pale—so

pale—stood Lucy. She spoke to me—I heard no sound, and yet I knew she spoke, recognised her gentle voice, even, and understood her words.

“Do not be afraid, Bertie, dear, I will save you.”

“But you? but you?” I asked voicelessly.

Oh, the anguish of it, the cruel, bitter anguish! The next moment I knew from herself that all that fiend had told me—ay, and more—was true. She moved towards me and kissed my forehead, and as she did so, the lamp, with its baleful fumes, went out, and a breath of fresh air seemed to fill the cabin.

She stopped again, and whispered: “Good-bye, dear brother—till we meet,” and then—she was gone.

I suppose I fainted, for the next thing I remember is the cabin being full of men, one of whom held me in his arms, while another—the village doctor—was pressing some pungent restorative to my nose and mouth. Amongst them was the detective Joyce, and he was speaking to the constable, who replied:

“I tell you I don’t know who she was or how she came. She was young, I should say, and seemed pale, but I was fairly dazed. Blest if I can tell you what her voice was like, either, but it was pretty plain what she said: ‘Mr. Bertie Desmond is on Mr. Felix’s wherry, and will be murdered if you are not there in a quarter of an hour.’ Somehow I felt sure it was the truth. ‘All right, miss,’ I said, ‘you and I’ll go to the constable’s, and get some men.’ ‘You must be quick,’ says she, in the same queer sort of voice, ‘and you will take the murderer of Miss Carroll.’ ‘What! thinks I, as I got on my coat and cap. ‘You seem to know a lot about it, my lady, I must keep an eye on you.’ ‘Now, miss,’ I says aloud, ‘I’m ready; come along.’ And if you’ll believe it, Bill, she’d vanished—slipped out of the door, I suppose, while my back was turned. Then I came on to you, and here we are.”

“I wonder who she was?” said the constable, musingly.

I knew! Ah! I knew.

In a few minutes more my speech returned to me.

“Listen, Joyce,” I said, and my voice sounded hoarse and strange, “I accuse Mr. Felix of having murdered Miss Lucy Carroll, and of attempting to murder me. If he returns before I have finished, arrest him.”

And then I told them of my suspicions and the discoveries that had

aroused them; related the subterfuge by which Lucy had been lured on board, and how I was drugged, and the hideous confession Felix had made, and then showed the diabolical contrivance of the innocent-seeming table. Barely had I finished, and while the faces, even of the constables and the crime-proof Joyce, were still pale with horror, when the sound of sculls was heard.

"This is the cursed scoundrel; d—— him," muttered Joyce. "Come on, Bill! You stowed away the men all right, I suppose?"

I heard Felix clamber on board, then a scuffle, a shout, and Joyce's voice. "I arrest you for murder"; and then the tramp of feet returning, and the next minute Felix was in the cabin, handcuffed. He was pale, but his face still wore the sneering expression; only once, when he looked at me, did it change for a moment into a glance of malignant hate.

Then and there the officers made an exhaustive search in the cabin, and found evidence enough, not only of poor Lucy's murder, but of others of which nothing had been heard. In all cases the victims were women. It seems too awful to realise, but there seems little doubt that the inhuman, satyr-like miscreant, had actually experimented in the fearful nameless tortures, which were the subject of the pictures and books that were found concealed.

While they were thus engaged, I heard a sound break from the prisoner: a ghastly groan of unutterable horror. Looking up, I saw, standing beside him, the figure of Lucy, looking down at him. There was no anger or exultation on her face, which was passionless and calm as that of an avenging angel. Then she slowly turned to me with a smile of infinite tenderness, and without a word she raised her hands with a gesture of farewell. Then she vanished.

I looked at Joyce. He was leaning, deadly pale, against the wall. I think he understood then.

"The prisoner! look to the prisoner!" shouted the constable, darting towards him.

But too late! Felix had raised his manacled hands to his mouth, and succeeded in pressing his signet ring against his teeth. A terrible convulsion seized him, and he fell dead into the very arms of the officer.

* * * *

There is not much more to tell. Nothing could be proved against the deaf and dumb sailor, and he was suffered to depart. The Rector

and old Miss Carroll did not live long after the terrible truth concerning Lucy's death came to light. You may be sure I did not let them know *all* the horrors of it. I got my commission just after that, thank Heaven! and affairs in Africa were lively enough to keep me from brooding. But the events of that terrible night are never quite absent from my mind, and I repeat to myself, with a glow of love and reverence—for who but I knows the Heaven-permitted mystery of the answer?—poor Joyce's awe-struck question: "In God's name, Mr. Desmond, *who gave the warning?*"

Nell.

You as comes preachin' 'ere
 'Bout 'eaven and 'ell,
 Say, what becomes o' them
 As don't do over well?

Cause why? You mind this alley 'ere?
 Well, 'taint a lovely spot.
 Yes, there's some bad 'uns, Lord,
 The pace is bloomin' 'ot.

Look 'ere, jist tell us this
 'Fore you begins a preachin',
 And I'll listen, s'elp me bob, I will,
 Tho' I've 'ad no teachin'.

There was a gal down 'ere,
 They called her Nell:
 She went wrong, they mostly does:
 Say! is she in 'ell?

You see, she killed the brat
 She loved so well,
 And then herself—'twas better so,
 For me and Nell.

I was her mate, you see,
 And loved her well;
 You'll not find many like
 My faithful Nell.

Damn it!—work was slack,
For times were plaguey bad,
Hard to get bite and sup
For Nell and the lad.

And things got wus—I went for work,
And left the kid and Nell,
How they lived—Gawd knows,
More 'an I can tell.

When I comes back—both gone,
Gawd streuth, nigh starved they say,
So they both just snuffed out :
'Twas the only way.

I knows as that's a crime,
And sinners go to 'ell,
D'ye think that's where they're gone,
The kid and Nell ?

Why not repent, you say ?
Look 'ere, jist mark it well,
Could'n Gawd 'a done without
The kid and Nell ?

You talk to me of 'eaven,
I dunno, I cawn't tell,
It 'ud be no 'eavan to me
Without my Nell.

Jist as you've a mind,
Your 'eaven or your 'ell,
It makes no odds to me,
So I'm with Nell.

Thank ye, Mister, for your talk,
But see, you may as well
Jist say a prayer like 'fore you goes,
For me and Nell.

GERALD HAYWARD.

Chulalongkorn and the Siamese.

By S. E. SAVILLE.

LAST year our country was favoured by a visit from Li Hung Chang, one of China's great men. This year, a neighbouring country has seen its monarch set out to observe and learn some of the European ways. The King of Siam is an admirer of much that is British ; so much so that before circumstances made it possible for him to visit our country, he sent one of his sons to be educated here. And through his generosity, several Siamese of noble birth have been students in England some time, receiving the advantages of Western civilization.

Chulalongkorn is a man of great enlightenment, and, like his late father, is an English scholar and scientist. His father, King Mongkut, was an accomplished man, master of Sanscrit, and well acquainted with English, Latin, and French. He was a contributor to various scientific journals, and a member of the Royal Asiatic Society ; he was devoted to science, and his enthusiasm in its cause was the means of his death, which happened through fatigue and exposure while observing an eclipse.

Siam has but a scanty literature, and affords but limited means of study and improvement. All its books are metrical in form, legends, romances, law books, history, astrology, alchemy, and medicine alike. Chulalongkorn soon learned all it had to teach, and was not slow to search other countries for his literary edification. In his library are English classics ; German, American and British newspapers. He is a reader of Darwin, and an admirer of many of our eminent men ; a busy and hardworking monarch, taking interest in the welfare and progress of his people. He is a staunch reformer, and has abrogated many absurd and inconvenient customs. Subjects who seek audience of the King have no longer to toil through an endless labyrinth of prostrations and other forms of cumbrous etiquette.

Slavery is not entirely abolished, though His Majesty has done, and is doing his utmost to accelerate its end. Where slavery exists it is mainly bondage for debt, and prisoners of war are the only absolute bondsmen.

Education, which for the bulk of the people is elementary, is

entrusted to the Pongyees, or monks, who, according to Buddhistic principles, exact no fee, but are paid by menial services from their pupils. It has not yet made rapid strides, though the King has interested himself in the cultivation of the people, and now there are several schools of more advanced teaching, and more varied branches of instruction in Bangkok, the modern capital of Siam.

The domains of King Chulalongkorn embrace the greater part of the Indo-Chinese, and part of the Malay Peninsula. Menam, the river of Bangkok, annually overflows its banks, as also do other lesser streams. The inundations extend nine or ten miles on either side and for more than one hundred and fifty miles in length. This occurs between June and November. By this, and artificial means, the country is well watered, and is extremely fertile; yielding luxuriant crops of rice, cotton, sugar cane, hemp, and all kinds of spices, fruits and vegetables. The Siamese prepare the land for tillage as soon as the earth is sufficiently moistened by the floods. They plant rice before the waters have risen high, and as they rise slowly, the rice keeps pace, and the ear is always above water. Cotton trees are numerous, some of which yield *capor*, a very fine cotton wool, too short, however, for spinning, used largely for filling mattresses.

The Fauna is amongst the richest in the world; and the Flora resembles that of Hindostan and Burmah. Among the forest trees are included teak, rosewood, ironwood, banyan and bamboo. The latter grows chiefly in marshy soils, and often to a prodigious size; it is used largely for constructing houses which are slight buildings, raised some height from the ground, in consequence of the summer floods.

The people are mostly agriculturists, but the cultivation of the soil is carried on with most primitive appliances. They also work in tin, in iron, and in gold; the latter is made up into trinkets, and much gold leaf is imported to China, for gilding pagodas. Large quantities of tools and weapons are manufactured, though by antiquated means. The Eastern tribes live by cultivating rice, collecting honey, beeswax and resin, and by the chase.

The country is rich in metals, and precious stones are found in many districts. Bangkok is a great commercial centre, and does a large export and import trade with China, India and European countries. This city has taken the place of Ayuthia, the former capital and seat of government; it possesses some notable buildings: the Golden Mount, a structure four hundred feet high, with high, pinnacled dome,

is one of distinction. The King's Palace, whose quarters cover a mile and are enclosed with high walls of glittering white, is quite unlike any of our English buildings. The Temples are national in structure: *Wat Poh*, famous for its huge form of the dying Buddha, one hundred and sixty feet long, worked in gilt, and its tessellated marble floor with marks of the holy footprints. These, which at a distance look most marvellous, and glitter like gold and jewels, are, in fact, flimsy, at least to the English mind, and composed mainly of broken glass and shells. What does Chulalongkorn think of Westminster, of St. Pauls, of the Tower? Perhaps that they are sombre, huge, substantial. Perhaps that he has better at home.

There has been a great influx of Chinese into Siam, who entirely monopolise some branches of trade, such as metal working, and the making of jewellery. Out of a population of five millions, fully one million are Chinese, who preserve their own religion, customs, and dress. They settle down and marry Siamese wives, and by their independence and secret societies are a source of great apprehension to the natives.

The Siamese people form a distinct Mongolian group. The Tai, or Mongolian proper, mostly inhabit the Menam neighbourhood. The Laos, a less numerous variety, occupy the East; and the Shans, dwellers of the North. In appearance, these people cannot be said to be good looking; they are small of stature, but well proportioned; light yellow in complexion, with small black eyes, large mouths, black teeth, and short round noses. They shave off their hair, except a small tuft on top; though the courtiers and their associates imitate the King, who has adopted the European fashion. The women cut theirs short, and make it stand up on the forehead, much as if they had had a substantial fright, and the consequences had become hereditary.

The dress of the Siamese is simple, being a long piece of cotton or silk worn round the waist, tied to form a sort of trousers; and they have a muslin shirt with wide sleeves. In winter, a long scarf of stuff or painted linen is thrown over the chest and shoulders. There is little or no difference in the dress of the sexes; the female costume is distinguished mainly by an abundant display of bracelets, anklets, rings, and gorgeous gold ear ornaments. The men also have the ears pierced, but use the slit as a cigarette or flower holder. They go in for elaborate tatooing, which is not only a painful operation, but a

marvellous work of art. The King wears a vest of brocaded satin, which is exclusively a royal garb; he also indulges in a cap, sugar-loaf shape, crowned by a coronet of jewels. Great respect is paid to the head, which indeed is held sacred; and to stroke or touch that of another is considered an affront. It is equally inadmissible for an inferior to ride, or travel, or sit with his head higher than a superior.

The King is attended by women, who do all his offices for him, except that of touching or putting on his cap, this service is left to a more distinguished attendant. The King's retinue is attired in red.

The Siamese are apathetic, and almost passionless; they are remarkably lazy; much of their time is spent in amusements, festivals, sports, or games. Kite-flying is an adult pastime in great favour. They are fond of shows, lotteries, boat races, setting fishes or crickets to combat, cocks and dogs to fight. Festivals are a great delight, which they lengthen out into long terms of holiday making.

They usually have but one wife; though some who can afford, keep several concubines. Woman holds a good position, has a fair influence, but no education. She is placed under no restraint, and before marriage is absolutely free and unfettered. Men address her in respectful and complimentary terms, and she is modest and attractive. Both sexes are notably chaste and temperate; punishment for infidelity is severe, and if a priest be convicted of breaking his vows of chastity, he is led to a public place, stripped of his yellow ecclesiastical robes, and mercilessly beaten. His monastic life is changed for that of a menial position in the King's stable, where he is set to the congenial work of cutting grass for the royal elephants.

The marriage rites constitute a mysterious and peculiar ceremony. Before the event, astrologers are consulted, the nativity of both are calculated, and it is determined whether their union is likely to be fortunate or otherwise. Doweries and presents are given and received on both sides, and long and stately processions formed. Precepts from the Buddhist scriptures are read, and blessings given by the priests. Then the curtain, which has concealed the modest bride, is withdrawn, and the couple seated near each other are sprinkled with holy water. Numerous prayers close the ceremony, and many days of feasting follow.

The Siamese are by no means a loquacious people, and, like the Chinese, avoid speaking in the first person. Though polite and kindly disposed to strangers their intense reticence makes it difficult for

travellers to gain much knowledge of them. They are, however, a cheerful people, and expert in mimicry; they are fond of tune and song, and very proud of their national music.

Their laws, though not very full or complete, are mostly just, owing much to the scrutiny of the late King Mongkut and his son, the present ruler. They are mostly of Chinese or Indian origin. In the Courts of Justice, when sufficient proofs are wanting, they have recourse to an ordeal trial, like that of our Saxon ancestors: walking on burning coals, putting hands in boiling oil, swallowing pills, chewing rice, etc. But these practices are discountenanced by the more enlightened authorities of Chulalongkorn's rule. A punishment, admirable in its way, is that the criminal be paraded in irons about the streets, proclaiming his crime in a loud voice. If he stops he is castigated. A nobleman who, according to tradition, cannot be punished by the actual shedding of blood, if he commits capital offence, is put into a bag and beaten with sandal clubs. No doubt, in that hour he wishes he were not of noble blood.

Little or nothing authentic is known of the ancient history of these people. There are records of four dynasties of Siamese Kings, extending from A.D. 1350; the great-grandfather of Chulalongkorn was the founder of the present dynasty. The government is Despotical Monarchy, the title of the King is "Lord of the White Elephant." There is a deputy or Vice-King, who has limited powers, and with them a palace and court of his own. The King has a Council of State, which includes a Minister of War, of Foreign Affairs, of Agriculture, of Justice, and of the Northern Provinces, as well as thirty Councillors, and the Royal Princes. Each village has its chief or Ramman, who sees after its welfare; and the Mandarins or Siamese magistrates, are not the oppressive slave drivers some are wont to designate them. It would be much against their own interests, at least during the lifetime of the present King, to treat their inferiors any way but humanely, as their power depends very much upon their popularity.

They are strict Buddhists, though not of a very pure type; Spirit and Ancestor worshippers, to whom they make many and varied offerings. King Mongkut divided his people into two sects: the Reformed, known as *Dhammayut*; the Unreformed, or older sect, otherwise, *Phra Maha Nikai*. The former attach more weight to observance of canon; the latter to meditation. The more ignorant

have much faith in magic powers, and believe the most absurd and impossible feats to be performed by the magicians.

The Siamese usually cremate their dead and bury the ashes, except in cases where they mix the dust with lime, and use it as a cement for the walls of a tomb. Among some of the lower tribes, the bodies are left to be devoured by dogs or vultures. Until the body is removed to the Temple grounds, the priests pray over it day and night; the interval of death and cremation is lengthened according to the rank and wealth of the person. A pyramid is then erected over the grave.

Siam is a country of elephants; in some parts it would be hardly possible to travel but for their help; an instalment of them is kept in every village. But the White Elephant is the darling of the people, and happy is the man who, in his hunting, is fortunate enough to capture such a treasure. When he does so, it is forthwith sent to the King, who pays a noble price, and frees the hunter and his posterity from all taxation and liability from military service henceforth and for ever. The White Elephant, or the "dirty buff," as some profane Englishman has ironically styled it, is believed by the Siamese to be "an incarnation of some future Buddha." All albinos are treasured; white monkeys are kept in houses to keep them free from rats and other nuisances; and there is a species of white ant, whose nests resemble the shape of pagodas; these are never destroyed, much to the detriment of books and other valuables to which ants are partial.

Of course, in a far-off country like Siam, there is much in the ways and customs of the people which is odd and uncongenial to a Western mind; but one is always glad to recognise any sign of common sympathy and means of mutual understanding between countries, however distant their borders lie. And this visit of King Chulalongkorn's has awakened our interest and reminded us that the world over, there are good, philanthropic and enlightened men to help in the progress and evolution of the human race.

Paid in Full.

By EVELYN E. BOGLE.

PROLOGUE.

It was a damp, foggy night, the station lamps seemed only to make darkness visible, and the broad chalk line that had been drawn to show the edge of the platform might easily have escaped the notice of many.

The falling of the curtain on a popular play in a neighbouring theatre was responsible for the number of people that were waiting the arrival of the 11.15 train, now overdue by five minutes. Presently signs of its approach were heard. A general forward movement was made, the crowd jostling and pushing against each other, A tall young man, in a big overcoat, was standing at the edge of the platform, a cigar between his lips, his hands in his pockets. As the people behind pressed forward, someone in the crowd seemed to recognise him.

"That you, Drummond?" he said. "I thought I saw you at the theatre!"

Drummond turned quickly. At the same moment a man jostled against him; the platform was very greasy, and whether in turning, or as a result of the unexpected collision, it would be difficult to say, but suddenly he slipped, lost his balance and fell backwards, disappearing at once into the darkness!

A horrified murmur broke from those who were near enough to see what had taken place, changing instantly to one of admiration as the young man, whose sudden greeting had partly caused the accident, after gazing earnestly for a second into the black darkness beneath, coolly dropped down after him, evidently with the intention of rescuing his friend.

But now a red light could be dimly seen down the line, and a hoarse shout of terror rose from the platform. Porters came running with lighted lanterns. Shouts and cries were heard in all directions. Only one sound rose above all, and the red light grew larger. It was the approaching train!

There was an instant's hush, then everybody seemed to rush in one direction. Voices rose loud again, till they culminated in a hearty cheer, as a dozen eager hands helped the two young men on to the platform, just as the train thundered into the station!

"That was a narrow shave!" "By Jove, a moment later and both those chaps would have been done for!" "One of the pluckiest things I've seen!" "That big fellow was stunned by the fall; without his friend he would never have got on the platform: he owes him his life!"

It was in this strain that the conversation was generally carried on by the men who were now leaving behind the smoky station that had so nearly been the scene of a tragedy, while the two principal actors were sitting in a first-class carriage, both hatless and with muddy coats, but otherwise whole in wind and limb.

They would probably have embraced each other if they had been any other than Englishmen, and Drummond might have made a much more eloquent speech than the few hastily uttered words, which he almost muttered, whenever they found themselves alone, and which the other as hastily pooh-poohed, affirming, that as he had been the cause of the accident, it was only right that his hand should help to save him. Then for the rest of the journey they regretted the loss of their hats, and the general muddiness of their clothes.

It was a curious turn of events that brought those two men together, for the acquaintanceship was slight, and up till that moment they had almost *dis*-liked each other.

But when their ways parted, Drummond's hand-clasp was firm and close as he said:

"Well, put the story as you like, Powell, but I'll *never* forget that I owe my life to you."

And he meant every word he said, though neither, then, had the least idea what the remembering of that fact would one day cost Oswald Drummond.

CHAPTER I.

I FLUNG open the drawing-room window, and leant out. It was a lovely spring morning. In the garden plot below, an impertinent colony of sparrows were tearing my crocuses to pieces, but on seeing me, all flew away with many angry chirps and fluttering of wings. What a delicious smell there was in the air! The primroses would be coming out in the Craven Woods, I knew, though, perhaps, one would have to look for them. But under the damp, withered leaves, that had kept the winter frosts away, they would be hiding their pale blossoms, and your hand might sink down some way before it found the end of the hairy pink stem, and broke off the wrinkled leaves that surrounded it.

But *my* hand would not be the one to search them out this year, for Craven Hill, our old home, was "let;" and "let" to a horrid city man, who probably did not know a primrose from—a carrot; and whose object in renting an old country place, must, of course, be a desire to force his way into some kind of good society. Ned only laughed when I said these things, however, and declared that "society" gladly opened its doors to much less presentable specimens of the *nouveaux riches* than old Drummond, but unreasonable as it might be, all the same, I felt I hated the man who now occupied the place.

Oh, how different everything would have been if my dear old dad had not followed the hounds on his skittish new mare that muggy autumn day three years ago. He was quite dead when they brought him home, and the days that followed, when poor Aunt Matty was never seen without a damp pocket handkerchief and reddened eyes, and Mr. Bennett—dad's man of business—apparently lived in the house seemed like some bad dream.

Then I remember Ned's behaviour hurting me so much. How he could find fault *then*, at such a time, with *anything* dad might have put in his will. And above all things, when he was not even engaged to anybody, why should he object to that clause which prevented him coming into the greater part of the money, unless he was unmarried at the age of twenty-five. Especially, as Mr. Bennett said, that under any circumstances enough money had been left him to keep up Craven Hill in proper style. However, on that point Ned and

he disagreed, though, after a little the former cooled down, and things appeared to go on much the same way as before. Till last summer, when I came home from school, a "finished" young lady, Ned suddenly declared that he was not able to keep a big place like Craven Hill, and as he could not sell it, he meant to let it to someone with a longer purse. The idea seemed dreadful, especially to poor Aunt Matty, who had lived there all her life—except with a break of four years, when she had left to make room for her brother's bride, returning at the end of my father's short married life to fill a mother's place to Ned and me. I even went so far as to ask Mr. Bennett if my money could not be used to eke out my brother's limited means. But he had only smiled grimly as he negatived any such idea, and finished by asking if I had ever successfully filled a sieve with water. So Craven Hill was let, and as Aunt Matty absolutely refused to leave Penshurst and go to London as Ned proposed, we took "The Hollies," a nice little house, with a tennis ground and orchard, on the Craven Road; and Aunt Matty obtained a grain of comfort from the knowledge that her bedroom window commanded a view of the chimneys of Craven Hill. Ned, of course, lived with us, but within the last year he had been a great deal in London, a proceeding that rather vexed Auntie, for Ned was always jolly, unless very much worried about money, and the house seemed dull without him. Besides, Aunt Matty distrusted the attraction that drew him to the metropolis, "To meddle successfully on the Stock Exchange," she said, "required a steadier head than dear Edward had." And sometimes I agreed with her, though lately, "dear Edward" had been so gay and light-hearted that I was fain to believe there was no cause for anxiety.

As I leaned out of the window, however, that bright spring morning, it was of myself alone I was thinking, and of those primroses that now could only be picked by that horrid Drummond man, while I was, or should be, dusting the drawing-room, and I had just decided that to this occupation I should give fuller attention, when I heard the gate clash, then steps crunching up the gravel walk, and I suddenly remembered that Bobby Gray, the rector's youngest son was coming to play tennis, and spend a day of his Easter holidays with us. And I had not finished dusting yet. Well, he would have to pass under the window before he reached the door. I would call down to him to get out the balls and racquets; that would give me a little time.

Oh, what a grand new hat he had on! A white sailor with club colours! The impudent little monkey; it was prettier than mine!

I looked at the duster I held in my hand—there was no dust in it, and what a surprise he'd get.

The temptation was irresistible as that jaunty sailor hat bobbed under the window! I leaned a little further out, then let the duster fall from my hands. Would it flutter harmlessly down? Or—no! It was right over him. I drew back in fits of silent laughter, and running out of the room, went to the head of the stairs. The hall door stood wide open; of course I had half expected to meet Bobby thirsting for revenge, but perhaps this was a deep laid plot. He meant me to believe he had gone away; but he *was* there, I heard him.

"Didn't I catch you beautifully," I cried. "*Some* girls can take good aim, you see. And you need not stand outside and pretend to be cross," I added, descending the rest of the stairs. "Come in; I want my duster."

"Oh, thank you," said a voice, surely deeper than Bobby's. "I will; and believe me, no fault can be found with your aim." A tall form darkened the doorway, and I stood as if rooted to the ground, quite overpowered with discovering that it was not the rector's youngest son who had been my victim, but a grown-up young man, whom I had never seen before in my life: and there he stood before me, his eyes bright with laughter; holding in one hand the duster, in the other, the sailor hat.

"Oh! oh! oh!" was all I could say at first. What would this man think of me? That I was mad? Idiotic? I made a desperate attempt to recover myself. "I—I thought you were Bobby," I gasped. "A friend; you know."

"A friend!" he echoed: and the absurdity of the situation seemed to strike him forcibly, and he broke into a peal of laughter so hearty and infectious that I was obliged to join in.

"I don't know what you must think of me," I said, as soon as I could speak; "and you're so much taller than Bobby. I can't think how I made such a foolish mistake, except that seeing only the top of a person's head——"

"Is very deceptive," he finished. "I quite agree; but I think I see a boy coming up the avenue; if it should be 'Bobby,' here is the weapon," holding out the wretched duster, "which in your hands

proves so deadly; I," moving to one side, "will not be seen, so do pray treat him as you had intended, and do not let me hinder the ends of justice."

I felt my face grow hot as he spoke, and knew I looked both awkward and silly as I took the duster in my hand, not with any idea of following his advice, but because I did not exactly know what else to do.

Of necessity this man must think me both unladylike and peculiar, and he had every right to be exceedingly angry. But I think my face must partly have betrayed my feelings, because as the steps came nearer, he added hastily: "Of course I am only in fun, for after all, I *am* the one who deserves punishment because I should not have called at such an early hour, even though it is on business, and by so doing I hoped to find Mr. Powell at home."

"I'm *so* sorry my brother is in town," I begun, but Bobby's voice drowned the rest of my sentence, for catching sight of me as I stood in the doorway, he shouted:

"I say, Doll, don't let us play tennis this morning; far jollier to go primrosing in Craven Woods, and bother the Drummond 'lot!'"

Then as he caught sight of the tall figure behind me, he seemed thrown into sudden confusion.

"Murder!" he ejaculated, and his cheeks got quite red, while he added, with an awkwardness very foreign to him, for Bobby was never shy with strangers, "I—I beg your pardon."

The young man laughed again. He seemed to have a keen sense of humour.

"Not at all," he said, "and I should think this an ideal morning for primrosing."

"Ah, but not in the Craven Woods," I put in, dolefully.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because they aren't ours now, and the people who have it are——"

Here a sudden inarticulate gurgle from Bobby made me pause. His face had got so red, he really looked as if he were going to take a fit. But the eyes of my new acquaintance were still on mine.

"Well," he said, "what about the people who have it now? Do you know them?"

"No," I answered, wondering at his manner.

"Ah! perhaps you may some day. But anyway, I am sorry to

have missed seeing Mr. Powell. I will leave my card." Then picking up his hat, he added, "I think you may safely go primrosing in Craven Woods to-day, or any other day."

I gazed after his retreating figure with astonished eyes, and then I turned to Bobby, while a horrid thought crept into my mind. "Who is that man?" I said. "Why did your face get so red just now? And what does he know about the Craven Woods?"

"Plenty!" was the terse response. "That's young Drummond, and if I had not coughed to attract your attention, *you* would have given yourself nicely away. As it is, I'm the only one——"

"Oh, no, no!" I wailed. "Oh, dear! I thought things were bad enough before; but to think it was at one of the Drummonds I threw that duster,"

"You—did—wh-a-a-t?" Bobby's eyes were twice their usual size.

"Threw that duster at him from the drawing-room window; I thought it was you in a new hat. It went right over him. Oh! what *will* I do if Aunt Matty ever hears? You're a horrid, disagreeable little boy," I added, as Bobby went off into shouts and peals of laughter; and I saw it was useless to expect sympathy from him.

"If I'd only been there!" he giggled.

"I wish from my heart you had," I replied, "and then this would never have happened. But, Bobby, of course you won't say anything about it to auntie, Ned, or anyone at the Rectory?"

"Trust me," he replied. "But what about him—Drummond?"

"Oh *that* will be all right. The confidence in my voice evidently surprised him."

"Will it?" he queried. "You seem jolly sure, I thought in your opinion he was a 'cad,' and altogether horrible. You've altered your mind haven't you?"

I hesitated a moment. Bobby was right: I had altered my mind about the "Drummond lot," and felt, at that moment, quite sure that my confidence in one of them was not misplaced.

"You see," I said, slowly, "he did behave very well, under the circumstances, and—Did I ever say he was a 'cad'?" Then it was very silly of me. I think he is quite—quite nice."

"Well," said Bobby in a tone of supreme disgust as I went upstairs to try and finish the drawing-room before Aunt Matty appeared, "you girls *are* a funny lot!"

That evening, quite unexpected, Ned arrived in time for dinner. Aunt Matty, of course, was enchanted, for lately he had been a good deal away, and her face was wreathed in smiles as she sat at the head of the table, and listened to him descanting on the muddiness of the London streets, and how much pleasanter it was down here; but I thought he seemed rather subdued in his spirits. Dinner was half over before I found an opportunity to show him Mr. Drummond's card.

"What kind of people are they, Edward?" asked Auntie. "I think it so curious that they should take a place like Craven Hill, and then never come near it for seven months, missing all the hunting."

"Old Drummond fell ill very soon after they took it," answered Ned. "I met his son the other day, and he told me they were coming down whenever his father was able for the journey. For my part," added he, laughingly, "I think it is a great pity the old fellow recovered. Such a tyrant as he is, expects his son, who must be thirty, to trot round as obedient as a six-year-old, and though he is simply rolling in money, young Drummond has a paltry allowance, and has to keep his accounts and *show them to his father* at stated intervals. I believe his wife married him for his money, and very candidly told him so afterwards; she is dead. And another son, much older than this one, ran the old boy into a lot of expense, put his name to some bill or other, nearly ruined him, and then dropped out of life to escape the worry that followed. The old fellow was nearly mad over the business—that was before I knew anything of them—and I believe he is 'cracky' now, so perhaps that's some excuse for the way in which he treats his son. I don't know how Oswald Drummond stands it; I shouldn't. I say, you know, Aunt Mat, we should call on them."

"My dear Edward, there is no necessity, and if you think the man mad, or——"

"Oh no, not mad; he is as sharp as a needle over business, I can tell you; but we should go. Young Drummond is a capital fellow, you'd like him, I'm sure. Look here, Aunt Mat, you and I will call together. It's not proper to take Doll, she's too frivolous, and I'll buy you a new bonnet in town, that will make you look so bewitching, old Drummond will be your slave for life."

Aunt Matty beamed on her beloved nephew, and gave in of course, though she told him "he talked very foolishly."

As we were leaving the room, Ned called out that he could not find his pipe.

"It's on the writing table," I said, as I ran back. "Where are your eyes?" I repeated, picking it up.

"All right," said Ned, shutting the door, "I did not really want it. I had something to say to you. Look here, Doll," he continued, "I'm in an awful hole, and I want you to lend me some money—twenty pounds."

"Twenty pounds?" I echoed. "Why, I've only ten in the world till next quarter!"

Ned turned sharply round. "Didn't you get your money last month?"

"Yes," I answered, "but there were several things to pay, and——"

I stopped, wondering if Ned had quite forgotten that I had lent him ten pounds some months ago, and my allowance was not large enough to give such a large sum without missing it. Evidently he had, for he gave a little laugh.

"I'm afraid we're birds of a feather, Dolly: though I can't see what you find to spend your money on down here, but I daresay it's an easy job under all circumstances. At the same time, I *must* get twenty pounds before Saturday."

"The day after to-morrow?"

"Yes; you give me that ten pounds, and I'll get the rest from Aunt Matty. I tell you, Doll, I simply *must* have it, or something dreadful will happen." Ned's face vouched for the truth of this; all the youthful, boyish look had fled suddenly.

"Of course I'll give you the ten pounds," I answered at once, "and I might get some money advanced from Mr. Bennett, if——"

"No, no; certainly not!" he broke in; there was almost a touch of terror in his voice. "He's such a suspicious old bore. Of all people, I don't want him meddling into my business. No; I'll get ten pounds from Aunt Mat, and with yours I'll be all right. You are a little brick, Dolly," he added, kissing me, "and I hate taking your money. But what is a fellow to do?"

"Keep away from London," I suggested. "It's always then you get into debt. Now you're here, Ned, do stay. It will please Aunt Matty so."

Just at that moment we heard her voice calling to us, and I let

Ned go into the drawing-room by himself, thinking that he would best make his request alone, and when I appeared later on, everything had evidently been satisfactorily arranged, for Ned was winding Aunt Matty's wool, and giving her selections from the latest comic songs—for which she had a strong, though secret, tendency—with a careless ease and lightness, that contrasted strangely with his manner in the dining-room, and made him look like a boy without a care in the world.

Towards the end of the evening, Aunt Mat's beaming smiles were interpreted: Ned had said he was sick of London, and intended never to go back again, unless on urgent, pressing business.

CHAPTER II.

SOMEWHAT to my surprise, it seemed as if Ned meant to keep his word, for the days and weeks went past, and he showed no desire to return to town. Aunt Matty and he went to call on the Drummonds, and she returned evidently impressed favourably. But it was old Mr. Drummond's sudden illness (a return of that malady from which he had newly recovered) that really made us friends.

Illness in any form always appealed to Aunt Matty's sympathies; and in this case they were all the keener, because, as she used to pathetically remark: "The poor man had neither wife or daughter to look after him. And what is a son in sickness?"

"A convenient object on which to vent your temper, I should say," put in Ned, who had just come from Craven Hill, "at least, Drummond *père* seems of that opinion. I shouldn't advise you to go and nurse him, Aunt Matty, though that is what I can see you are longing to do. He is ever so much better now, but I give you my word, he was within an ace of chucking the beef tea at his son's head, plate and all, this afternoon."

"My dear Edward, you are prejudiced against that poor old man, he must suffer a great deal, and perhaps the beef tea was not good."

Ned laughed. "You may be right there," he said, "it looked awful stuff, and he said it was smoked."

"Smoked!" echoed Aunt Matty. "Smoked beef tea!" There was almost a note of triumph in her voice. "Then I will make him some, from my mother's receipt."

"Heaven help him!" piously exclaimed her nephew, as she left the room. "He'll have to swallow a quart a day now."

And I really think he did after that, but it seemed to agree with him; and certainly Aunt Matty won for herself the undying gratitude of the younger Drummond. He used to drop in at tea-time nearly every day, and, unless he was riding, Aunt Matty never allowed him to depart without a supply of beef tea, even though a servant came every morning from Craven Hill for the purpose. But I am sure she thought it deteriorated in quality by passing through the servants' hands, and that some extra healing power lay in the portion which she put into the funny little brown jar, and which she knew was carried straight to the invalid. It was a proceeding that always seemed to tickle Ned immensely. But I never saw the tall figure, that appeared so to dwarf our little rooms, swinging down the avenue, holding the beef tea jar in one hand, with such sublime unconcern as to who he might meet, or what comment might be made on his appearance; without a feeling of admiration, and a secret wonder if—barring Aunt Matty—anyone would ever like me well enough to carry a small quantity of beef tea in all weathers for my especial delectation?

"Dorothy," cried Aunt Matty, one morning, coming into the drawing-room, with a basket in her hand. "Do you feel inclined for a walk?"

"Ned took the dogs nine miles, yesterday," I answered, "and a double supply of beef tea has gone to Craven Hill. Then I flung down the book I was reading, for Aunt Matty's crestfallen appearance went to my heart, and I hastily added, 'But a walk will not come amiss, I suppose,' with a sigh, 'it's only a hundred in the shade.'"

"It's only a few eggs," she explained. "I'm sure Mr. Drummond——"

"Eggs? Why, Auntie, they must have heaps!"

"My dear, these were laid by the 'curate's wife' yesterday and this morning."

To an outsider, this statement might have sounded odd, almost alarming, but a favourite hen of my aunt's had been so christened by Ned, long ago, owing to its anxious expression, and incessant demands for food, two things that he evidently considered peculiar to curates' wives—reading for "food" "subscriptions." At any rate the

nickname had stuck to the creature, all danger being averted by the fact of there not being any curate in our parish, and its fond mistress thought no eggs so good as those laid by it.

So on receiving this information, I said no more but went up for my hat and parasol, and set off for Craven Hill.

I was getting more accustomed to ringing the door-bell of my old home, and having it answered by an important-looking liveried manservant, but at first it had been uncomfortably strange.

As I passed the library window, I was made aware that old Mr. Drummond was there, and evidently in a very bad temper. But his voice that had been raised querellous and shrill, died into sudden silence, when the servant announced, "Miss Dorothy Powell."

Both father and son were seated by the big writing table which was littered with books and papers. Despite the heat of the day, a small fire was burning in the grate, and a screen portioned off one part of the room.

"Aunt Matty sent these eggs with her compliments to Mr. Drummond," I said, as Oswald came forward to greet me. "I told her it was sending coals to Newcastle, but she considers these eggs particularly fine."

Mr. Drummond turned round in his chair, and stretched out a wrinkled, yellow hand to me.

"Miss Powell is exceedingly kind," he said, "and whatever comes from 'The Hollies' is particularly nice. I really do not know what I should have done without the excellent soup with which she still supplies me. I have servants, and a son, but though I am asked to believe that they made super-human efforts, yet till your aunt came to the rescue I never got proper food."

"You're an ungrateful old wretch," I felt inclined to say, but instead, gave a feeble smile, and murmured, "Really!" Both the smile and the word seemed ill-timed, for he suddenly brought his hand down on the arm of his chair, and exclaimed, with a glance in son's direction:

"Haven't you manners or wit enough to take that basket from Miss Dorothy, and ask her to sit down?"

"I do not wish to sit down, thank you," I replied, as Oswald presented a chair, in silence. Usually his father's little ways seemed not to disturb him in the least, but something was amiss to-day, I could see, and sheer indignation at the irascible old man prompted

me to add, though I knew he seldom rose from his chair, "and I was waiting for *you* to take the basket."

"Eh? What's that?"

"I was waiting for *you* to take the basket, the eggs are for you," I repeated in a louder key, fury in my heart, but an engaging smile on my lips.

"Humph!" He gave me a disconcerting stare. "Well, you see, I find it difficult to get up now, as you know I have been very ill. If it had not been for my strong constitution, I should probably have rejoiced the heart of *one* person by dying."

I heard an ejaculation behind me—short, forcible, irreverent. Some article of furniture was moved noisily to one side, and Oswald apparently left the room. The atmosphere seemed charged with electricity. Feeling sure that if I did not follow his example, my tongue would utter truths, that were best left unsaid. I advanced to the sole occupant in the big armchair to bid him good-bye. But he did not seem in any anxiety to be left alone.

"Aren't you afraid of your complexion, that you brave a sun like this?" he asked suddenly. "Why didn't you give your brother those eggs to carry up? You should make him do your messages—or—perhaps he won't. Eh?"

"I should not ask him," I answered, shortly, "I have servants to do the messages that I feel disinclined for."

"So have I," he snapped, "but *I* prefer that my *son* should do them."

I made a desperate effort to summon another "engaging smile," and for the moment congratulated myself on the nasty speeches women can deliver under such a shelter.

"Then you are to be congratulated on having one willing to carry out your preferences," I said.

"But he is *not* willing; I *make* him!"

I looked at the shrivelled figure in the armchair, mentally contrasted it with Oswald's Goliath proportions, and it was a real, irrepressible, smile that curved my lips.

"You may laugh," he continued, "but there are other powers than those of the body, my young lady; and '*money*' is mine. Ah! my son, like my servants, serves for that."

"He does not, you know he does not," I burst out, foolishly letting my tongue run away with my sense. "He does what you tell him, only because—because——"

"Go on!" Mr. Drummond leaned forward and clutched me by the wrist. His eyes were positively glittering. "Because what?" he demanded.

"Because he's good and kind—and you're his father—and old—and he's sorry. Oh, I'm sorry," I broke off, "but it's not all my fault; you provoked me to say those things, and I have not the patience of some people."

"My son, presumably! Well, there he is behind you! Satisfied, I hope with his fair defendant. I suppose after the reprimand you have seen fit to administer to a man nearly four times your age, I must not *command* him to see you home, and return the basket with my compliments to your aunt. But if I *beg* him, as a favour to his old father, for whom he is sorry——"

I had reached the door by this time and was groping for the handle, I could hardly see for the angry tears that blinded me—but my one desire to get away from that horrid, sneering voice. Then suddenly I felt someone else's hand close over mine; the door opened and shut, and I was standing in the hall with Oswald Drummond beside me.

"I'm *so* sorry," I said, "so sorry; I forgot he was ill. I've got such a temper, you see. But how can you stand it? I would have thrown something at him."

"What? A duster?"

I laughed feebly. "I suppose I'm very foolish."

"If that be folly, I love it!" he interrupted, with a suppressed vehemence, that almost frightened me, and I began to wonder what would happen if any of the servants appeared, for my hand was still in Oswald's. "But you must not think my father is always like this," he continued. "You came in at an unfortunate moment. He was very much put out, and then he says things he does not in the least mean. He has had a great deal of trouble in his life. It has made him suspicious, I think. I'm sorry this happened, in one way, in another I'm glad. I would not have missed hearing what you said just now for—worlds!"

A soft footfall on the staircase behind, served to remind him that we were standing in the hall, and dropping my hand, he said, in a more conventional tone:

"May I carry the basket back for you?"

"Yes," I said; and snatching up a cap from the stand, he followed me out of the house.

"Let us go by the woods," he suggested. "It's longer, but a great deal pleasanter. Did you come that way?"

"No," I answered, feeling aware that my replies were rather monosyllabic.

"Did you actually prefer that grilling road, or do you still cherish a mistaken idea about trespassing? I thought the ivy had completely covered that awe-inspiring notice which, by the way, *we* never put up."

"Perhaps that is the reason I give such heed to it," I answered, glancing up with a little laugh. "It would never do for me to despise a warning that had been issued by our own family."

"Then I shall get it taken down."

"Oh no, don't; it's an ancient landmark."

"You must use this path as you used to do, then."

"That would be impossible," I answered.

"Why? I thought you had ceased to regard me in the light of an impostor, Dorothy."

He had never called me by my name before, and I was provoked to feel the colour rush into my cheeks.

"So I have," I murmured, rather indistinctly.

"Then promise me, at any rate, not to toil on that dusty road when you *can* come this way. Promise me," he repeated.

"Very well," I answered, and for a little time there was silence between us.

Our footsteps fell noiselessly on the mossy pathway. The hot noonday sun only found its way through the leafy screen above in long, slanting rays. The birds had ceased their loud spring songs, and except for an occasional twitter or a startled cry, as one flew up from the under-brush beside us, the woods seemed bathed in a slumberous silence. Certainly it was more pleasant than the road.

After we had left the woods and were nearing home, we overtook Ned, who was walking slowly along, with a very moody look. I had noticed that a letter he had received at breakfast had evidently not been of a pleasant nature.

He nodded to Oswald, and continued to walk with us in a gloomy silence, very unusual to him. But when, on reaching home, Oswald refused my invitation to come in, he urged him to do so.

"I want to speak to you very particularly, on a matter of business."

"Business?" Oswald repeated, giving Ned a sudden, keen look, under which the latter reddened slightly.

"Yes," he answered, kicking the gravel about with his foot. "The old confounded business. I *must* speak to you, Drummond."

Oswald let the gate go with a clang. "Very well," he said, quietly: "but I have only half an hour to spare. We lunch at one."

A vague sense of uneasiness oppressed me, as I saw both young men disappear into the smoking-room together. Ned's "business" was so invariably followed by a request for money, that I could not help wondering what he had to say to Oswald Drummond.

At last after a few moments' thought, I told myself there was no use worrying over the matter. Ned surely would never borrow from *him*. And in other ways I could not wish him a better or safer adviser.

And meanwhile, my unfortunate interview with old Mr. Drummond lay so heavily on my mind, that I felt I must go, confess to Aunt Matty, and find out if, in her eyes, my conduct had been beyond the pale of forgiveness.

Poor Aunt Matty! My confession caused her great distress of mind. Old Mr. Drummond, Oswald and I, she mourned over and pitied by turns, till I wished I hadn't said a word to her about the matter.

Then, on the morning of the second day, she was somewhat comforted, and I as much surprised, when Oswald brought us each a note, addressed in his father's handwriting.

"I am to wait for an answer," he said, with a laugh, as he seated himself on the sofa.

Aunt Matty's contained a formal invitation for her and Ned to take tea that afternoon at Craven Hill. The substance of mine was the same, but couched in different language.

"My dear Miss Dorothy," it ran, "our interview, the day before yesterday, was of such a pleasing and enlivening character, that if you will be so kind as to accompany your estimable aunt this afternoon, I will consider it a favour. That our ideas on the upbringing of young men do not coincide, is a thing to be greatly deplored (!) but still, it need not make us enemies. So I hope that some time we may renew the interesting discussion, and that you will let me benefit from your store of experience.

Hoping to see you this afternoon, I subscribe myself,

Yours truly,

THOMAS DRUMMOND."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, ruefully, when I had finished. "I—I don't exactly know what he means!"

"I am not aware of the actual contents of the letter," said Oswald, "but my father would like you to come to Craven Hill this afternoon, I know."

"It's very kind of him, then," I answered. "Will you say I'll come with pleasure, and I'm sorry—or, no—" I broke off—"I'll go now, and tell him myself; for I was very rude and silly."

I felt my cheeks grow hot as I spoke, and recollected what Oswald's opinion had been on that subject and how he had expressed it. But Aunt Matty highly approved of my decision; and I rushed upstairs, seized my hat and gloves, and was down again and nearly out of the house, when I heard Oswald's voice behind me.

"You are in a hurry," he cried. "Don't you think we may as well go together?"

"No," I answered, tugging at my gloves. "I never can apologise properly before a third person. Besides, I am going to run nearly all the way, or else I'll not be able to do it at all."

He laughed. "Then under these circumstances, I think I'll follow slowly. You'll return this way, won't you?" I nodded, and hurried off.

Mr. Drummond was seated in the same armchair in the library, when I was shown in, only this time he was reading the paper, and certainly looked in a better temper.

"I got your letter," I said, feeling rather hot and breathless, "and I came to tell you how sorry I was for—for the other day. I'll come to tea this afternoon, with great pleasure. It's very kind of you to ask me."

Mr. Drummond looked at me in silence for an instant, then he waved his hand in the direction of a chair. "Won't you sit down?" he asked. "You look—rather hot."

I did so, feeling irritated and snubbed.

"Why should you be sorry?" he pursued. "You gave me some valuable and interesting information on Tuesday. I thought I said so in my letter."

I still held that document in my hand, and at this point gave it a vicious squeeze. "Of course you are making fun of me," I replied, "I wish you wouldn't, it feels so—horrid."

This seemed to amuse him extremely, for he laughed aloud, with a joviality I had not given him credit for possessing.

"And what makes you think I treat my son badly?" was the next disconcerting question.

"Oh, I never said anything of the sort," I gasped.

"No, but you thought it; that was easily seen. Your face, my dear young lady, is not a difficult one to read, especially when you are in a temper. But it isn't unbecoming. Good heavens, though, what a stormy married life you will have! Oh, you are going away? Remember, come at four-thirty, tea at five. Good-bye, my dear; thank you very much for your visit, it has cheered me greatly."

Of course the last words, delivered in quite a different tone, made me turn when I reached the door, feeling that my *inward* fury required another apology. But dreading a repetition of his sneering words, I did not stop, and merely nodded in what I considered a conciliatory way, which again had the effect of amusing him immensely, and with his laughter still in my ears, and ruffling my equanimity, I left the house. I was half-way home when I met Oswald.

"Well," he said, interrogatively, "is it peace?"

"I don't know," I answered, half vexed, half laughing. "I *am* to go to tea this afternoon."

He smiled. "My father has taken a great fancy to you," he said.

I stared at him. Was this a repetition of his father's satirical style of conversation? But a glance at Oswald's face, showed me that he was in earnest.

"I think you must be mistaken," I exclaimed. "Do you know what he has just told me? 'That I will have a stormy married life,' inferring, of course, that the fault will be mine. I don't think that says much for his opinion of me. Indeed," I continued, as Oswald made no reply, and did not seem, even, inclined to step out of the middle of the pathway, thus effectually preventing my homeward progress, "I feel so afflicted, when I consider the miserable future in store for me, that I think I should take a vow of eternal spinsterhood at once."

"Do nothing of the sort," he said, quickly, "unless you want to make me very miserable. Dorothy——"

Oswald's voice sounded exactly as it had done that day, when he had told me that he would not have missed hearing what I had said, "for worlds." I wasn't *quite* sure, but I think I rather

liked it. He came a step nearer, and stopped, flicking the leaves with his stick.

"I wonder if you have any idea how much I love you," he said, "since the first moment I saw you?"

"Oh, no!" I interrupted, "because, you know, I had just thrown the duster at you."

"Well," he replied, putting his arm round me, "what about that? I give you free leave to do so again. I always did have a fancy for Katherine, in the 'Taming of the Shrew'——"

"Oh, Oswald," I cried, "you surely wouldn't be so horrid as that man; or else your father's prediction——" I stopped in sudden confusion. What a perfect idiot I was, but Oswald seemed rapturously delighted.

"Dorothy my darling! my love!" he cried, kissing me. "You needn't be in the least afraid. And my father's predictions are like his sharp speeches—of no matter."

At this moment, a crashing in the bushes was heard, and Tinto—Ned's retriever—came bounding out, quickly followed by his master.

"Hulloa, Drummond!" Ned exclaimed. "This is a piece of luck; you're the very person I wanted to see. Oh," he added, with a glance in my direction, but so occupied with his own affairs, that he failed to notice my confusion and Oswald's evident annoyance. "Are you going home, Doll?"

"Yes, and I am seeing your sister on her way," put in Oswald.

"Gracious! she can surely go that step by herself, and I do want to speak to you a moment."

"You are coming to us this afternoon?"

"Yes, but this is important business."

"Oh, *bother* the business," replied Oswald, with some heat. "I'll talk it by the hour this afternoon," he added, seeing Ned's gloomy face, "but," decidedly, "I am going home with your sister just now."

"Well then, of course, so am I," said Ned, crossly, and as Oswald could hardly forbid him, we three walked home together, but conversation seemed suddenly "nipped in the bud."

"Dorothy," said Oswald, in a low tone, as we parted at the gate, "I shall speak to your aunt to-night."

(*To be continued.*)

A House of Cards.

By KATHARINE SILVESTER.

"WELL, what do you think of her?"

"She looks more like Clara Vere^{de} Vere than Susan Evans—that's if Clara Vere de Vere had red hair and wore a *pince-nez*."

"I had meant my manner of welcome to be all that was kind and re-assuring, and, at the first hand-shake I felt it was I who was being patronised!"

"How she holds her chin in the air! She can't have caught that 'Varsity accent from the butchers and bakers of Hallchester," and the speaker lay back in the low armchair and fingered contemplatively the bangles on her bare arm. She was a tall handsome woman of middle age, with a waist ridiculously out of proportion to the girth of her magnificent bust. The mischievous gleam in the still sparkling eyes accorded with the frivolity suggested by the eighteen-inch waist. Her companion was somewhat her junior, with a personality less accentuated, though the likeness between the two proclaimed them sisters. Both women wore a pronounced style of evening dress, whereof the richness of material and ornament was in keeping with the room in which they sat. Here draperies hung in shining folds, there was a profusion of graceful objects in rare glass and porcelain; valuable paintings were hung on the walls. The French windows opened on to a rose-garden and the air was filled with the scent of flowers, yet for him who had eyes to see, the *coup d'œil* afforded by the interior revealed I know not what of vulgarity in the tastes and nature of its usual occupants.

"That's the worst of those High Schools," resumed the elder woman after a short pause. "They produce such confusion of ranks. Yet in Violet's case I don't see what else I could have done. She would never have worked had she lived at home, and I could not have been troubled to superintend her studies. It was such an opportunity for her to be brought up with her cousin in Hallchester and to go to school with her there. Hallchester air has done wonders for Violet. Her infatuation for this *Miss Corn-chandler* is the one drop in the cup. Her letters are full of her friend's charms and distinctions. She would have sulked all the holidays if I hadn't allowed her to ask her here."

"And now she's here, you'll have to amuse her. I'm sure she won't be the boys' style with her æsthetic gowns and her red hair. Besides they'll have the Tresidder girls to play with. Poor girl! It will be hard lines for her to pay a visit to the fairy palace and meet no Prince Charming!" As she spoke the door opened and a middle-aged man in evening dress came into the room. His hair, which he wore parted down the middle, was quite grey, but the fact that his rather handsome face was clean-shaven imparted to it a certain false air of youth. In the wide expanse of his shirt-front gleamed a large diamond stud.

He approached the two women smiling and showing fine white teeth.

"What are you two plotting together? I'm sure there's mischief on foot by the look in Adelaide's eyes," and he shook his finger at the elder woman.

His rather husky voice was pitched in the low tone of good breeding, but there was no mistaking the accent of Cockaigne. An added gleam leaped into the eyes of the woman addressed, and she laid her heavily-ringed hand on his sleeve.

"Augustus, be nice and help me! I want Violet's little friend to have a good time with us, and I'm afraid the boys won't be amiable. Do get up a little flirtation with her, as you did with that Boughton girl last year. You remember how she thanked me when she left, with tears in her eyes, for her too delightful visit. And it was all for the sake of your *beaux yeux*. But this would be much better fun. The girl looks an ice-maiden. You will have to begin at the very beginning. Augustus, say you will, and take a load off my mind! You can do it so beautifully when you try. What's the good of a bachelor cousin if he can't make himself useful at a pinch?"

The man smiled somewhat fatuously.

"Don't you think I'm getting too old for this sort of thing? To be treated with contempt would bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

"Suppose it were the other way," further objected Mrs. Ransford's sister, "and you were to break her poor little heart. It wouldn't be nice to find her hanging on one of the trees in the park." The suggestion seemed to fire their cousin with the ardour of the chase.

"Well, I'll do my best to please you," he said, walking to the mirror and examining his countenance while he made a pretence of

settling his tie. "But I refuse to be blamed for any undesirable consequences." Here the entrance of other members of the house-party put a stop to further conversation on the subject.

Upstairs in her bedroom Susan Evans was fastening white narcissus into the front of her green Liberty silk dress. It irritated her that her fingers trembled, and to see in the glass the bright unusual flush on her cheeks.

It had been almost in a spirit of condescension that she accepted her school-fellow's invitation to spend some weeks of the summer holiday at her parents' country house. Violet Ransford was very well in her way, and her humble adoration was pleasant to receive. But by reason of her talents and of a certain inborn distinction of manner and person, Susie was queen of society at the Hallchester High School, and there were quite a half dozen girls in her own sixth form to whose families she would sooner have been admitted. These latter belonged to the Cathedral set in the town of which her father's shop overlooked the marketplace. Perhaps it was her social aspirations that underlay her passion for early services, and generally accounted for the fact that in the teeth of the family dissent she had grown up an ardent Churchwoman.

It was her delight during school interval to stroll in and out among the trees of the old garden which picturesquely served as a playground, with some choice spirits of her little world. Here she talked church gossip with all the mundane ardour of a school for scandal, while her skilful fingers worked at a bit of embroidery destined for some purpose of church decoration. Often she would walk home with her friends to their houses in the close; and the occasional invitation to tea in canonical parlours would fill her with uppressed elation. With unconscious imitativeness she had caught their accent and the prevailing manner of dress. She read their books, talked their language, played their music. The home-life of the shop-parlour seemed to herself a mere accident in her existence, it rarely troubled the serenity of her belief in her own gentility. Her people had ended by accepting her estimate of the situation and intruded themselves and their ways as little as possible on her consciousness. But they admired her at a distance, regretting only the divergence in their religious habits. Indeed, any stranger witnessing the relations between Susan and her family would have taken her rather for a gracious passing guest than for a daughter of the house.

But on this first evening of her visit to her friend's home she was conscious of a feeling of shyness which made her put off till the last minute the necessity of joining the party in the drawing-room. Was it possible, she asked herself, that she could be awed by the smartness of the new surroundings, she who had held herself independent of surroundings? High life as it was to be met with in the back parlours of the Close had seemed such a simple affair. Here everything was elaborate and complicated. The liveried footman who handed her her tea, the lady's maid who asked for the keys of her luggage, had been elements in her new sense of uneasiness. And it annoyed her to think that the ways of these people whose social rank she knew to be inferior to that of her Hallchester Churchocracy should have power to fluster her. She wished she could control the loud beating of her heart as, her friend's arm drawn through her own, she entered at last the long low room where the people stood about in groups, awaiting the announcement of dinner. Susie was conscious of curious glances in her direction, as Violet's mother hastened up to her and said some pleasant words, looking about her as she spoke with a long-handled eye-glass.

"Augustus!" here she beckoned sharply to her cousin, who was talking to a fashionably dressed woman at the other end of the room. He rather slowly obeyed the summons, indulging his interlocutor with a slight grimace expressive of dismay; and in another moment Susie found herself on his arm and forming part of a long file of people sauntering across the hall to take their places round a dining-table, brilliant with blossom and berry. For the moment Susie ceased to be oppressed by self-consciousness, and surveyed the scene with keen interest. Mingled with her High Churchism was a strain of Puritanism inwoven by her early upbringing; the gleam of the diamonds on bare arms and bosoms, the frequent laughter, the popping of champagne corks, made her feel as though she were assisting at some unholy revel. The sound of her companion's voice in her ear, pressing her to take wine, made her turn towards him to emphasize a refusal. What a strange way he had of looking at her—this old man—for as such his grey hairs had at first made her classify him. And what strange things he was saying to her! What induced him to take her, an acquaintance of five minutes' standing, into his confidence and complain to her of the loneliness of his bachelordom, and tell her that wealth without the domestic affections was to him as Dead

Sea fruit? She felt inclined to laugh outright, though his direct unflinching gaze and the caressing tone of his voice made her cheek burn and her eyes seek the tablecloth. What could he mean by telling her of his distaste for dark-haired women, and how that it was an auburn-locked lass who had broken his heart years ago? Then he ate his dinner silently for a space, lifting his eyes every now and then to bestow a sentimental look upon her. Would this dreadful dinner never end, thought Susie. She felt they must all be looking at her and him; but a hurried upward glance showed each pair absorbed in their own talk and laughter. When the sign was given for the women to leave the room, Susie almost leaped to her feet.

"Ah, you are glad to leave me," sighed her tormentor as she brushed past him. "And I have just spent one of the best hours of my life. But we shall meet again in the drawing-room."

Susie said no word and gave no look in reply as she hurried after the string of bright dresses disappearing through the doorway.

In the drawing-room Susie walked straight to the open window and stood, with her hands clasped in front of her, looking with unseeing eyes into the dimness of the dusk-clothed garden. Her breath came quickly and she was trembling. That ridiculous person! Surely this was not the way in which society men usually talked to girls! Perhaps it was *gauche* of her, though, not to have answered in the same strain. Anyhow she would try now to get out of his way, for he positively frightened her.

She looked back into the room and saw the women in flower-like groups gossiping and laughing as they sipped their coffee. A girl walked to the piano and opened it, and the room was filled with the tender notes of a French love song. Violet stole across to where her friend stood, almost screened from notice by the heavy curtain, and passed her arm about her waist. The black coats began to appear in the doorway. The air seemed laden with suppressed excitement. Susie felt as though she were in the middle of a yellow-backed French novel, and wondered what the people at home would say if they knew.

"Mais tu ne m'aimais pas !

"Non-non ! Je sais que tu ne m'aimais pa-a-as !"

The song ceased and there was a loud clapping of hands.

"Violet, take me for a walk in the garden. It looks lovely—the clouds have just blown away from the moon, and here it is stifling." Violet looked a little curiously at Susie's flushed face.

"Certainly dear. Will you wait while I get a shawl? Mother will call out if I go without one," and Violet hurrying away, she turned her eyes again to the window.

"Ah, Miss Evans, not falsely was it written, 'Seek and ye shall find.' This curtain could not hide you from me. Do you know French? That was a charming song they sang just now. '*Si tu m'aimais*,'" and Cousin Augustus hummed the air with his head on one side in a way that caused Susie to bite her lips from repressed desire to laugh, her distress notwithstanding. Violet reappearing with the shawls, he asked to be allowed to join their walk and there was nothing for it but to consent, in spite of Violet's little *moue* of distaste; and the three stepped out into the moonlit garden. Susie trusted that Violet's presence would act as a check on her admirer's behaviour. The darkness spared her his amorous glances, but as he walked by her side he kept up a stream of murmured compliments and tendernesses, bending low, so that his breath touched her cheek and made her flesh tingle. She knew little of the ways of men with girls, and the one availing episode round which she could spin a halo of romance, and which lived in her memory, stored up as it were in lavender, was a summer's evening walk she had once taken with the young Curate of St. Barnabas. The meeting had been a chance one, and they had strolled for an hour by the river which runs through the fields outside the city, talking of the choir practice and the cathedral restorations. But he had gathered her honeysuckle and wild roses off the hedges, and she had felt the pressure of his hand at parting. The honeysuckle still lay between the leaves of her Bible.

She thought of it all now, and contrasted the man, who was walking beside her with her companion on that summer evening.

"Let us go in now, Violet," she said suddenly, and seizing her friend's arm ran up the steps of the terrace, and back through the open window into the drawing-room.

There was little sleep for Susie that night. As she lay tossing on her bed the events of the evening kept passing before her excited mental vision. That man with his extraordinary manner and talk! A sudden parallel occurring to her between her own case and that of Mrs. Nickleby in her relations with the old gentleman in the smalls, made her laugh out loud into the darkness.

Yet for all his grey hair Cousin Augustus was what her mother's friends would call "a fine figure of a man." Also the unmistakeable

vulgarity in manner and accent, which she would have shuddered at in the frequenters of the shop-parlour, seemed somehow less offensive in conjunction with a display of so much shirt-front. Yet it would be unbearable if his pursuit of her were to continue. She would have to go home before the allotted time. But what did it mean? What did it all mean? And it was only as the morning light peeped through the Venetian that Susie fell into dreamless sleep.

The housemaid knocking at the door with the hot water aroused her with a start. She jumped out of bed and at once began her toilet. The daylight had scattered the feverish humours of the night, and she was conscious even of being in high spirits. This visit was after all an oasis of novelty in the desert of her work-a-day existence—she must enjoy it to the full, in spite of Cousin Augustus, whose fantastic attentions she would endeavour to regard in the light of an experience. And she smiled at herself in the glass as she gathered into a loose knot the red hair he had praised. Then she opened the French windows, and leaned out with both arms on the sill, feasting her eyes on the beauty of the morning. Her room was in the front of the house and she saw a dog-cart drive up to the door, out of which issued a man-servant with a Gladstone bag, which he put into the cart. Some one must be leaving by the early train. Susie wondered idly who it could be, and the next moment she saw Cousin Augustus in black coat and top-hat get into the dog-cart and seize the reins, the groom jumping in behind. She drew in her head and listened to the sound of the departing wheels. So she was free from her tormentor for to-day at least, and she gave what she believed was a sigh of relief. Yet her spirits seemed to have lost something of their champagne quality.

* * * *

Ten days had elapsed since the first night of her visit. Susie was lying in a hammock, her hands folded at the back of her head, her eyes turned in the direction of the lawn where a game of tennis was being played. On her lap lay an open novel and a cabbage leaf of raspberries, which she had gathered in the kitchen garden for her own refreshment. The hour was eleven o'clock of the forenoon, and it would have been entertaining to see the expression of a member of the Evans household, had one suddenly appeared on the scene. For at home Susie's scorn of delights and love of laborious days had been felt though admirable to be yet crushing. Impressed by the habits

of unceasing industry to be met with in the households within the precincts, she had discoursed largely to her family on the *vulgarity* of indolence. Novels and bits of frivolous fancy-work were put out of sight during the morning hours for fear of her rebuking eyes. And it was strange to see how kindly she took to the new gospel of people to whom pleasure was the be-all and end-all of the daily existence. Her shyness had almost disappeared in the atmosphere of social *deshabille* produced by the out-of-door life. The luxurious surroundings, from having had an oppressive, grew to have an exhilarating effect. Every detail of wealth affected her pleasurably—the rare fragrance of the tea in the delicate china cups—the presence of a maid at her toilet—the muffled sound of her footsteps as she trod the richly carpeted floors. And she was rapidly becoming acclimatized in other respects also. During the first few days she had been shocked by the irreverence and persiflage characteristic of the general conversation. Sometimes too when the women were alone together the subject of the jesting and laughter had filled her with indignation and brought the blood to her face. To her own amazement she could now smile at their merriment, though she still flushed as she smiled. And at home laughter of any kind had seemed out of place in her presence, and few jests delicate enough for her refined ear! She did not pause to analyse her own changed attitude, and the voices of her old ideals grew fainter and fainter in her ears. Plain living and high thinking were good things in their way, but it was lovely to be rich!

And now as she rocked to and fro in her hammock she smiled curiously.

She had let her thoughts dwell a good deal on Cousin Augustus and that first evening of her arrival, which seemed so far away. He was expected back to-night—would he behave in the same fashion? Probably he would scarcely notice her, conveying thus to her the meaninglessness of his past attentions. Supposing, though, they had been provoked by genuine admiration and he should continue his queer court of her? How should she act? Would it be possible for her with her old ideals of life and love seriously to consider a marriage that would be in direct opposition to all of them? Yet how pale and cold and shadowy did these appear in the light of the new glamour. And a passion of desire filled her for an abiding place in this world of glitter and laughter where she was now only a passing

stranger. She felt that she could never endure to go back to the life of the shop-parlour with its odour of tobacco and its suppers of cheese and cold bacon. Unfortunately it was only a want of material refinement that produced the reminiscent shudder; the vulgarity that clothed itself in purple and fine linen and understood the manipulation of asparagus-tongs had ceased to jar on her susceptibilities. And she made up her mind as to the course she would take. Before, she had behaved like a frightened school-girl. This evening would find her better armed to encounter opportunity. If only his mood might not have changed! And the thought was almost a terror.

"Is Miss Susie still with you?" Susie caught the rather huskily spoken words as she entered the drawing-room a few minutes before the dinner gong sounded.

Cousin Augustus, who had put the question, was standing by the open window talking to her hostess. He looked round at the slight rustling made by her entrance, and held out his hand, his bold gaze causing her own to drop in spite of her resolution. Then he turned again to Mrs. Ransford, who was moving away. "What have you been doing to her?" he whispered as he followed her across the room. "She looks an altered creature. Last week she was an ice-maiden, to-night she is a Bacchante. A Bacchante with flaming hair."

"Then take care of your fingers," laughed his hostess, with a warning gesture.

That night and the days that followed were lived by Susie in a fever of excitement. There could be no doubt about the man's pursuit of her. He haunted her goings-out and her comings-in. His presence enveloped her like a cloud, and each word, each look she felt as a caress. It was of little consequence to her that her drama had its audience, which whispered and nodded and smiled when he pulled roses for her and followed her about the garden. One hope, one desire, alone possessed her; nothing else in the world mattered but that it should be speedily fulfilled. Was it the glitter of diamonds, or the light in the eyes of her pursuer that had so wrought upon her? She herself could have scarcely answered the question. Nor had she a mind to thread the maze of her emotions. Sometimes alone in her own room she would ponder over the effect the fulfilment of her dream would produce on her people at home, and on her friends in the Close.

They would think her possessed by an evil spirit, and that she had sold herself miserably for wealth.

They could never believe that the grey-haired vulgarian who had effected the purchase, could have made any sort of personal appeal to the heart of their high-souled Susie. Then would follow visions of herself in his box at the opera, with jewels on her neck and in her hair; or of driving through the streets of Hallchester, lying back among furs and cushions in a victoria, drawn by shining horses. Oh, it would be delightful! She did not dare to think of the possibility of a cold awakening. She felt that she could never again take up the threads of the old life. If she could not have the thing she desired, she would as soon go out of existence altogether.

There was to be a tennis party, followed by a dance on the day before the one appointed as the termination of Susie's visit. Her excitement had reached fever-heat, for she felt that a crisis must be at hand.

There could be little talk between the two all the afternoon, for Susie was wanted on the tennis-courts, and Cousin Augustus was no player. But wherever she moved, she felt that his eyes were upon her, and her own danced with the security of her happiness. She played as she had never played before, and the atmosphere about her seemed electric. People eyed her wonderingly. Her hostess cast uneasy glances at her and at Augustus, who stood by a tree watching. Mrs. Ransford wished heartily she had never made that silly suggestion; she would get into trouble all round if anything serious came of it; and Augustus looked dangerous.

When she went up in the evening to dress for the dance, the maid was taking off the stand a little white ball dress, which Susie had consented to let her "run up" for the occasion. The flush that rose to her cheek, as she stood before the long glass, while the maid laced up the low cut bodice, was not brought there by any sense of outraged modesty, such as she would have felt a little while back at this display of her neck and arms. She was blushing with pleasure at their roundness and whiteness, and was reminded by an involuntary thought of the added beauty that jewels could bestow. The maid had made skilful play with the red coils of her hair, and her dress fell in shining white folds. As she gazed, she lost all sense of familiarity with the pictured image of herself, and her heart leaped at the revelation of hitherto unsuspected charm.

That night was the night of nights. The music, the heavy scent of flowers, completed her sense of intoxication. Partners came crowding her programme was taken from her, and handed back to her filled up. She had never been to a real dance before, but she waltzed away now as if by instinct, her lips parted, her eyes shining, her cheeks flushed.

"Look at your little High Church Puritan," Mrs. Ransford's sister whispered to her. "We must be evil spirits to have charmed away all that holiness." The uneasy look of the morning returned to the elder sister's face, and she turned away without making a reply.

Cousin Augustus did not dance, but he stood looking on by the doorway, and Susie felt, as in the daytime, how his eyes followed her about. At a pause in the waltz, she found herself standing beside him. He turned, not to her, but to her partner.

"Miss Evans looks tired," he said, in a quick, dry voice, not looking at her as he spoke. "She shall come for a turn with me in the garden, and I will bring her back to you like a giant refreshed;" and Susie, with lowered eye-lids, took his proffered arm, leaving her partner to his surprise and indignation.

They stepped into the moon-lit garden, and there was no word spoken. But they were coming—they were coming, she knew; the wonderful words that were to open for her the gates of a fairyland of wealth and delight. Her heart beat with stifling quickness, and her limbs trembled beneath her. The continued silence became unendurable, and she braced herself into breaking it with a remark on the beauty of the moon-lit garden.

Was it a moth that had brushed her cheek in its flight? Seized with panic, she tore her hand from his arm, and fled up the garden in the direction of the house. By the verandah, she came to a sudden halt, and leaned against a copper-beech tree, her bosom heaving, her senses dazed. What could it mean? Why did he not speak? Had she been ill-advised to run away? Where should she go now? It would be impossible to return to the drawing-room. They would see what had happened where that moth had touched her face! What should she do? What should she do?

A figure came to the open window and looked out into the garden. It was Mrs. Ransford, and Susie cowered behind her tree. Mrs. Ransford looked anxiously hither and thither, and stepped quickly across the verandah at sight of her cousin, strolling up the lawn with his hands in his pockets.

"Augustus! What have you done with her?" Her voice sounded sharply, and anxiety was mingled with the vexation.

"My dear Cousin, am I your friend's keeper? Miss Evans was certainly walking with me ten minutes ago, but I have no right to chain her to my side," and he spoke with an air in which the unconcern was obviously assumed.

"Augustus! This must stop! The girl's head is turned. What I said was partly in joke, and you have gone far beyond the bounds of ordinary flirtation."

"There is no satisfying you women. I have put myself to great pains to oblige you, and this is your gratitude. Nor are grey hairs to be always counted on as a protection in a game of this kind!" This last was muttered to himself as he turned rather sulkily towards a side entrance to the house.

Susie had heard and understood. She managed to reach her room unobserved, and locking the door flung herself on the bed in a passion of shame, in which at first indignation had no place. One thing was certain. She could never face any of them again.

When the first light of morning peeped into the room, she tore off her ball-dress as though it had been a Nessus' robe, made a hasty toilet, putting on her outdoor things, and stole out of the house before even the servants were up. She walked the long road to the station at the rate of four miles an hour, although she knew she would have to await some hours the arrival of a train that would take her to Hallchester. The very intensity of her misery paralysed her power of definite thought; and she sat through the allotted time in the ugly little waiting-room with her eyes staring in front of her like a creature dazed.

On the hall-table she had left a pencilled note asking pardon for her sudden departure, but alleging no reason for it; and begging that her luggage might be forwarded during the day. Mrs. Ransford read the note, and knew she had been overheard; and her self-reproach was bitter, for at heart she was a good-natured woman.

Little Violet Ransford was distressed and mystified beyond measure. She did not go back to the High School, but was sent to Germany to "finish" her education; and never again came face to face with her friend. Once she and her mother had occasion to go to Hallchester, and as they walked in the town together, Violet looked eagerly into the faces of the passers-by in the hope of a chance encounter.

Suddenly she stopped with a little cry. Against the wall of a house opposite was nailed a brass plate inscribed with the words *Susan Evans, Ecclesiastical Embroideress*; and through the window of a first floor they caught a glimpse of a black-robed figure, crowned with red hair, and bending over an embroidery frame. A large cross fastened on a sort of rosary hung from her neck, and her appearance as well as the nature of her occupation suggested a mediæval nun. Violet's eyes filled with tears, and her mother seeing them made no comment as they walked the length of the street.

Life's Fitful Fever.

By M. HANSARD.

CHAPTER I.

It was Sunday morning, and Sir Brian Leycester was walking leisurely along the pleasant road leading from the Hall to the Church; he was escorting his aunt, Mrs. Mayfield, and her daughter Florence—both ladies being distinguished for a certain smartness of raiment that jarred upon Sir Brian's sense of the fitness of things. As they neared St. Faith's a slender graceful figure passed them, and involuntarily Sir Brian started, for he had caught a glimpse—fleeting as it was—of a lovely profile, and a mass of soft brown hair, which, combined with a certain grace of movement, made up a very charming personality.

"Who is that?" he asked abruptly.

Mrs. Mayfield smiled cynically. "You may well ask," she replied in acidulated accents. "There is too much theatrical display about that woman, who is only our organist after all. I think Mr. Ross might have shown more discretion if he had appointed some quiet elderly man, or staid matron."

"Ah, I remember old Fisher retired,—so *this* is his successor, is it?—what is her name?"

"How do I know? Flossy dear, can *you* tell your cousin what he wishes to know with reference to this—this person?"

Florence Mayfield adjusted her eye-glasses carefully, and smiled a quiet smile of meaning.

"She is Mrs. Drummond, Carola Drummond, if you want to know her name in full, and she plays divinely."

"That is a good thing, seeing she performs in a church," he replied, with an answering look of amusement. "Is she by way of being a *protégé* of yours?" But Florence put her finger to her lip and walked faster.

"I'll tell you another time," she murmured, pushing on hastily to follow her mother up the walk. Sir Brian quietly dropped behind.

Turning his head, he saw a tall, good looking stranger entering the church by another door, and he caught a look exchanged hurriedly, a flush on Florence's fair cheek, and an averted head.

"Oh!" said Sir Brian to himself, "here is more than meets the eye, and much more than Aunt Ellen is supposed to see. I wonder when I am to be enlightened."

For it was an open secret—well known to him—that Aunt Ellen intended him to marry her daughter, thus securing a provision for Florence, and a home for herself at a stroke. Aunt Ellen was a very clever woman in her way, only sometimes she was a little too clever, as in this case; for neither Florence nor Sir Brian had any intention of meeting her wishes, although, up to the present, they had kept their intentions to themselves. Florence had seen someone whom she liked, and Sir Brian believed of himself, that he was not a marrying man.

Mrs. Mayfield sailed into the Leicester pew, beneath the monuments of the Leycesters, in all the bravery of faultless attire, while the organist played a soft and dreamy voluntary, whose soothing tones fell on the ears of rich and poor with a gentle, solemnizing effect. It seemed, however, to Sir Brian, as if there were a strange vein of sadness in the music, and he listened with a sympathy which he could not understand or fathom. He had no business to be sympathetic with an unknown person, that person being a lowly organist of an obscure parish church.

She played well, there was no doubt about that, and she compelled the choir to sing in sweeter cadences, and with more attention to the words. There was a decided improvement since the last time he was here, and Sir Brian remembered this with a feeling of thankfulness to the unknown.

He said as much at lunch, and Mrs. Mayfield tossed her head.

"I detest mysteries," she said grimly, "and this woman is one. Nobody knows who she is, nor where she came from. I asked Mrs. Ross if she were connected with the Drummonds of Riding Tower, and she said she had never heard of any such connection. She is very close."

"Who?" asked Sir Brian, "Mrs. Drummond?"

"No," very shortly, "I meant Mrs. Ross. She is always so particular what she says."

"An example that might well be copied by others," replied her nephew in his most grave manner.

"I do not know that there is any 'mystery' anywhere," put in Florence quietly. "Mr. Ross advertised in one of the church papers for an organist. Mrs. Drummond answered the advertisement; and he was only too thankful to get some one like her. In a little place like Enderby, it is an advantage to have a lady with whom to work, and I daresay Mrs. Ross appreciates the novelty and the change."

"Oh, if you come to that, this sort of person cultivates manners as a set-off against other things."

"What other things," asked Florence.

But Mrs. Leycester made no reply. She meant to make her silence expressive, but somehow it fell quite flat, and the other two began chatting in a bright and pleasant manner about various matters, so that presently Mrs. Mayfield found herself in the background, where, strange to say, she had no objection, for once, to remain. She had great hopes for Florence, and every word, and every smile from Brian, seemed to make realization a little nearer.

"I saw a distinguished-looking stranger in the church," remarked Sir Brian, after a few moments. "Do you know him, Aunt Ellen?"

"What did you say? I was not listening," she replied confusedly, while Florence crimsoned painfully. "A stranger! It must be Mr. Whalton, an artist, who is staying at Mrs. Needham's, a man of no repute, I fancy—at least, I never heard before of him."

This was so laboured that Sir Brian found himself arrested by the description.

"Whalton, an artist," he said musingly. "Surely it cannot be John Whalton, of King's! He is rather well known, and a thoroughly good fellow."

"This man is as poor as—as a church mouse, it cannot be the same, Brian. What would your friend be doing here?"

"Painting, as he is an artist, too. There are many bits to tempt such a being into our neighbourhood, you know, Aunt Ellen. I must look up this lodger of Mrs. Needham's, for it is impossible that there should be *two* Whaltons, both artists, and both R.A's."

"I never said this man was—" but Brian rose hastily.

"I shall have my smoke out of doors," he said. "It is too fine to remain inside." And with a bow to the ladies, he called his dogs and disappeared through the glass doors that led out of the dining-room into the garden, Mrs. Mayfield and Florence at the same moment having passed into the corridor on their way to the drawing-room, where in semi-state Sunday afternoons were always spent.

Mrs. Mayfield felt ruffled, as she invariably did when John Walton was named. "If it had not been for that Quixotic Mrs. Ross, we need not have troubled our heads with the creature," she reflected. "She invited him to meet us, forsooth, and, as a matter of course, we are bound to know him, and I find him dreadfully presumptuous. He talks to Flossy as if he admired her. It is really too shocking, and I do not want Brian to see her talking to him; it might spoil matters. The worst of it is he is such a good-looking man."

She sighed a little, and sat thinking dismally. What a trouble life was, she reflected. How happy they could all be if things were arranged as she wished. It had all promised so well, too, when Brian came home from Egypt, in fact, until this other man appeared upon the scene; then her hopes received a check.

Mrs. Mayfield became restless as she remembered how restive Florence had been of late, and how she resented any reference to Brian. "Florence was always inclined to be headstrong, and to like her own way," she was saying to herself, when Dyson came in with the tea-tray. "If I could only bend her to my will."

Upon the organist she did not deign to bestow a second thought; she was an obscure person, whom of course, no one would notice. So reasoned Mrs. Mayfield, but so did not reason Sir Brian, her nephew.

CHAPTER II.

As Sir Brian walked down the avenue of his beautiful park, he thought of many things he had resolved to do. He was glad that Mr. Ross had secured a new organist, and the musician was good to think upon, though her look of sadness haunted Brian.

"I must find out what I can about her; she is very interesting, and very lovely," said he musingly. Then he saw the tall figure of the artist passing the gates, and with one bound he flew after him, catching him by the arm, to John Whalton's great amazement.

"I thought there was only one who had a stride like that," he exclaimed. "What led you here, John? I am glad to see you."

John Whalton had stopped. Now he held out his hand, and smiled.

"Art led me here," he replied. "Art,—and something else. I did not know you were at home."

"Only arrived last night," rejoined the other carelessly. "And now that I am here, and you are here, supposing we turn in for tea? It ought to be on hand now."

John Whalton held back curiously. "I do not think I shall be a welcome guest to Mrs. Mayfield," he said quietly. But Brian frowned.

"You are my guest, Whalton," he replied; and his manner made the artist turn at once. He was glad to accompany Sir Brian for more reasons than one. He would see Florence, under Sir Brian's wing, and surely not even Mrs. Mayfield could object to that. Under these influencing thoughts he smiled, and became more genial—more like the "Whalton, of King's," whom Brian remembered so well; and when they reached the Hall, there was some one else whose looks brightened, and who became, all at once, a happier-hearted person, upon whom Sir Brian beamed with kindness, though Mrs. Mayfield frowned ponderously. Even Mrs. Mayfield was rather afraid of Sir Brian.

Carola Drummond had seen the two men go up the drive towards the Hall, and she sighed as the trees hid them at last from view. She had heard Mrs. Ross speak warmly of Sir Brian, his goodness to the poor, his concern for the welfare of all the tenants; but she knew, with a woman's ready intuition, that Mrs. Mayfield was a difficult person, and that she was inimical to her.

"I am such a humble individual that I wonder why she should object to me," she mused; though no thought of her own loveliness crossed her mind. "I do hope she will not put Sir Brian against me, for in that case, he might influence the Vicar, and that would be fatal. Why can I not have a little peace in my life? I am so poor, and so forlorn; there is only one faithful friend left to me, and she is old and toil worn too."

Her eyes filled with tears: truly hers was not a position to be envied, neither was it one to awaken anyone's jealousy; yet it had awakened Mrs. Mayfield's, and it had disturbed her plans, though of this Carola had never dreamed. She had come to Enderby with an object, assuredly; but what that was, no one, not even Mrs. Ross, could have divined.

The old servant, who had followed Mrs. Drummond's fortunes, came to the door and held it open for her young mistress, and a pleasing odour of hot cakes steamed out to greet Carola.

"You're just in time, ma'am," said Elizabeth. "The kettle's right on the boil, and I have got a little nice cream. Come your ways in, my dear; you're about tired out."

"The day is warm," said Carola, as she allowed Elizabeth to deposit her in a large arm-chair, and divest her of her bonnet and cloak, "and the service seemed long."

"Aye, the bairns would be fidgetty too, I reckon; children's services are none so pleasant for those who have to conduct them, I reckon."

"Beggars cannot be choosers, Betty," said Mrs. Drummond, wearily sipping the fragrant tea which Elizabeth brought in a dainty cup, a relic of days long since gone by. With a few similar "relics," Carola had contrived to make her tiny home look home-like; and it was really very pretty indeed, and comfortable as Elizabeth's tidy fingers could make it.

The old woman often contrasted the present with the past, and did her best to remedy matters as well as she could, but "bad's the best," she used to say, with a shake of the head. It was "bad" decidedly, to remember things. Her eyes would often fill with tears as she thought what a bright and lively girl Carola had been, and how hardly fate had dealt with her. The hasty marriage, the sudden death of Carola's sole parent—her father, the subsequent poverty into which she had been plunged, were all imprinted deeply on the

good woman's heart. That Carola's marriage had turned out ill, she also knew, although this was a forbidden subject in the cottage. Roderick Drummond had disappeared abruptly from the scene, choosing a life of adventure and speculation abroad, rather than the tamer one of domesticity in England.

Enderby gave out that Mrs. Drummond was a widow, and neither mistress nor servant contradicted the assertion; but Elizabeth was fully aware that Carola always sought by preference to fix her home in quiet places, remote from excitement of any kind; because here there would surely be less danger of attraction for her husband. She knew, also, that he had a curious fancy for turning up when least required; but not even Elizabeth knew so well as did Carola, how unpleasant he could make his visits when he chose. There was nothing to be got out of a woman who had to earn her living by teaching music, and serving as a village organist; and fortunately for Carola, Roderick recognised this perfectly well; Carola hoped he would never find her at Enderby—her new refuge. As things were, she could just manage to keep a roof over her head, and supply the simple wants of her small household; for Elizabeth was the embodiment of care and economy, and could make Carola's shillings go as far—if not farther—than anyone else's.

And Carola found herself increasingly happy at Enderby. The Rosses were kind to her, they invited her to the Vicarage, and tried to gain friends and pupils for her; for Mrs. Ross was a sympathetic soul, and felt interested in this lonely young woman who had come to live among them. She lent her books, and was not happy unless Carola yielded to her entreaties, and spent as much of her spare time as possible with her. So the summer passed swiftly and almost happily; but for the constant dread that oppressed her, it would have gone quite happily. At any rate, Carola was more than content. Her smile came oftener, and her sighs were fewer. Chance threw her a good deal in the way of Brian Leycester. She met him often—and admired his fine upright character—as who did not? She became very friendly with Florence Mayfield, and—strange to say—it came to be a regular thing that this young lady and John Walton found her cottage a convenient spot at which to meet once or twice a week. Carola had not the heart to forbid these meetings, she felt so sorry for the girl whose mother was proving such an impossible person.

With the early autumn came the "shooters,"—one shooting-box after another opening its doors to entertain guests; and the hills became quite gay with parties of men, and dogs. Enderby always awoke to enthusiasm over the shooting season. It meant a good time for everybody. Even the services at St. Faith's were influenced by the incursion of strangers; the boys cleared their throats and sang better, the men clamoured for anthems with which to bewilder the unsuspecting visitors; and—"tell it not in Gath!"—the very Vicar felt bound to exert himself and cudgel his brains to some big effort in the sermon way with which to prove effective. The Church was full at this season; and it was whispered that the village obtained its fashions from the costumes thus imported. Carola alone seemed to pursue her way as before, unmoved by the excitement around. She had no time in the week to give to the "shooters," and on Sundays she had enough to do without wasting her thoughts on them.

Lately she had not felt that strange dread of hearing from Roderick that had hitherto made her life so bitter. She had grown absorbed in her new duties, and spent her leisure hours in cultivating the small garden at the back of the cottage, where she reared all manner of flowers, which served to brighten her home. It was a pleasant change of occupation, and gave her a certain amount of fresh air which was needful and healthy. Mrs. Mayfield often saw her thus employed, and made a few disagreeable comments on Carola's "*motives*" when she returned to the Hall.

She chanced to be walking by the cottage one morning while Carola was thus busy, and at the same time a man, coming in the opposite direction stopped too, and looked over the hedge, with a very peculiar expression on his face. As Mrs. Mayfield passed, she heard an exclamation, and glancing back, she saw him fling open the gate, two strides bringing him to the side of Mrs. Drummond, who, with uplifted head, was quietly watching his advance.

"What brings you here?" he asked angrily, and she—almost as sternly—put the same question to him. Then Mrs. Mayfield heard no more, for common decency required that she should "move on;" but she did not hesitate to make capital of the affair. It served for the whole of dinner that evening, and was really something sensational, out of which Mrs. Mayfield could easily construct a good deal. She had discovered by this time that the stranger was staying

at Birdhope with the Temples; and she began to wonder as to whether it would not be her duty to go over and warn them as to the man who was their guest. "He cannot be nice if he knows her," she murmured, when the others left her—wearied of the incessant harping. "It is not fair to the Temples that they should remain ignorant."

Her own ignorance on the subject was not troubling her in the least; neither did the exceeding coldness of Sir Brian disturb her mind. She was one of those terrible women who "say what they think"—regardless of others; and she did not care for consequences.

Upon a small substratum of fact she managed to base a large structure of falsity; for, although Roderick Drummond had unquestionably seen, and been seen by Carola, yet he had spoken few words, and had even striven—after the first angry amazement—to address his wife in his most genial manner, for it was no part of his present purpose to cross swords with her. He had other game in view—and game better worth his while, into the bargain. The Temples were worth knowing, they could be very useful to him; and as for Carola—why, it was rather a nuisance to have run across her just then. He only hoped she would have sense enough to hold her peace, as one word might easily destroy his "bubble reputation;" moreover, he had discovered, from what she said, that she was a mere teacher of music, and so she was not worth much in his eyes. He was not, therefore, averse to make terms of any sort with the woman he had so cruelly wronged. When he left her he was almost affable—but Carola, who understood him, sighed deeply. She knew him too well—gambler—rogue—villain, as he was at heart. She could not help contrasting him with Brian Leycester—the one so upright and honourable, the other, so depraved and vicious.

"Perhaps I had better leave Enderby now," she mused. "If he begins to visit here I must go. It seems hard to be always flying from misery, and I am no sooner settled than I have to move once more."

There was no pleasure in the idea of leaving Enderby; instead, she could not restrain the tears that filled her eyes. It was all so hard—so bitter for poor Carola; nor, indeed, was seeing her husband on that unlucky day the worst thing that happened; for Mrs. Mayfield had been so impressed by her discovery of Carola's wickedness in receiving a visitor, that she spread the news—with additions—

first at the Vicarage, where the tale was met with cold incredulity, and then at other houses, where it probably made more sensation.

It may safely be assumed that the story did not lose by being repeated, although the victim—Carola—did not hear about it until long afterwards.

If Mrs. Mayfield hoped by this means to turn Sir Brian against Mrs. Drummond, she failed signally. He became kinder than before; and many baskets of flowers and fruit found their way to the lowly dwelling, expressions of the sympathy that might not be spoken. This touched Carola very deeply.

But, "man proposes and Providence disposes," says the proverb.

While plots and counter-plots raged round poor Carola's unconscious head, the unexpected happened.

It was a glorious morning, and the moors were one mass of vivid purple, upon which the sunlight fell with dazzling radiance. A soft southerly wind just lifted the fern-fronds as it passed over, but it disturbed nothing—not even the down upon the wings of the butterflies that hovered to and fro, in company with the honey-making bees. The shooters were astir early, hoping for big bags; the dogs, the keepers, and the men tramped along merrily, making their way over the heather. Carola heard the voices and the barks as the groups from Birdhope passed the cottage; she could hear her husband's laugh, and she knew he would be at his very best that morning. Though she did not know it, Sir Brian was there, too; taking stock of the stranger, whom he did not know—but not too well pleased with him. They all swept on towards Hollow-Tree Wood, and she, putting on her hat and gloves, went down the village to give a lesson at Duns houses, a lonely farm on the road to Byrness. That lesson took an hour, and she walked fast on her way there and back. As she returned she found the village in a ferment. Something had evidently gone wrong, and Carola wondered. There seemed dogs and men everywhere on the green, in front of the inn, standing about the road. Someone darted out and caught her sleeve.

"Did you ever hear such a thing, Mrs. Drummond?—You did not know it? Oh, where have you been? They say"—here the voice was carefully lowered—"They say Mr. Temple is nearly distracted, but others declare he deserved it. I don't know the truth, but——"

Carola, confused, surprised—arrested—turned to the speaker.

"Is some one hurt, Mary Deans?" she asked, unravelling the story which the other was so anxious to tell. "Then who is it?" Some sense of an impending crisis made her leap to a conclusion. She seemed to know what was coming. Afterwards she remembered that she had never heard Mary Dean's reply—"Roderick" leaped into her mind. He was always so reckless! She made her way through the men round the inn door, and went calmly inside, with Mary Deans clinging in surprise to her arm. She seemed like one walking in her sleep; but everyone moved to let her pass. The landlady, indeed, came forward; but seeing the organist, she gave her credit for more knowledge still, and said she "hoped she could do something for the poor man over yonder"—so Carola went on.

Yes, she was right. It was Roderick who had been injured. He lay, with eyes closed, upon the sofa; his life ebbing away—his face deathly in its whiteness and ghastliness. Carola bent over him, and he opened his eyes.

"You!" he said faintly. "Of all people—you!—I'm played out, Carola—*Done!*"

Her whispered words may have reached his ear—who knows! The flicker of a smile crept over his face—then, with his eyes fixed on hers, he drew a long shuddering breath and passed from this world's stage for ever.

It was said that Mr. Temple could never forgive himself: for, after all—humanity is sacred, and life is life. He had unwittingly wounded a fellow-man to death, and his contrition was painful to see.

Mrs. Mayfield made capital of the last scene, and "exposed" Carola to her heart's content; but great was her anger when she found that Sir Brian and the Rosses knew more of Carola's history than she did, and that they but loved her more for all that she had endured. The last and greatest pang came a year or two later, however, when, to her unutterable dismay, Sir Brian announced that he was thinking of bringing home a bride to the hall, and that she was a lady whom he had loved for a long, long time in secret—that lady being none other than Carola Drummond, the music-teacher.

Mrs. Mayfield received two shocks in one morning; for no sooner

had she heard Sir Brian's unwelcome tidings, than she found John Walton waiting to interview her. That he should have dared to woo her daughter was too dreadful, though her feelings were soothed by the knowledge that he was rich enough to marry whom he pleased. She never fully forgave Florence, however for her indiscretion in allowing Brian to slip through her fingers; nor did she forgive Brian for preferring a penniless organist to her own smarter daughter. The young folks contrived to exist, in spite of her displeasure. They were happy. They loved, and were beloved; and they looked forward to happiness in the days that were to come.

Sir Brian never tired of telling Carola his love; and she, with face upturned, thanked Heaven for the blessedness that had come, at last, to her sorely-wounded spirit.

Life, love, joy—the best gifts earth has to give—came to cast their rays upon the path these two elected to travel hand-in-hand.

"My darling!" whispered Sir Brian, "With you by my side, I ask no other bliss;" and her reply—if she made any—was heard only by him.

* * * *

Mrs. Mayfield, in her disgust, fled from Enderby. She was too mortified to remain there; but she consoled herself by saying that she was sure her daughter and her nephew "lost prestige" by their "wretched marriages." No one agrees with her. In blessing others—and in being blessed—those she hates find love and peace to cheer them in their daily life.

The Forgotten Art of Conversation.

By A. CLARKE WHITE.

"'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis, 'tis true," may well be the burden of our lament when we reflect on the bygone glories of dialogue and monologue as set forth by the admiring Boswell and the admired Richardson, not to mention the "Spectator's" instructive conversations, evidently intended to supply a "long felt want" at our great-grandfathers' breakfast tables. The age of conversation is over, alas, and we—degenerate descendants of such superior ancestors—must content ourselves with mere talk. Now, talk is all very well, but it is not conversation, any more than police-court reports are literature, though they, in common with Meredith's novels, appear in print. It is not conversation, for instance, to say to an acquaintance "Hullo, old chap, how d'ye do? Glad to see you. Have a whisky and soda? No time? Well—so long!" Such a speech may have the merit of brevity and directness, but truly! it lacks elegance. Our grandfathers were a trifle long-winded, it must be owned, but they made up for it in courteous politeness at least. A century ago the above greeting would have been rendered thus—"Ah, my good friend, Mr. Brown! I am rejoiced to see you! You are in good health, I trust? May I invite you to drink a glass of ale with me? No? you are pressed for time? Dear me, I am extremely sorry to miss the pleasure of your society. Good-bye, my dear friend, good-bye!" and so on.

If we refer to writers of the past century, for instance, we find that one of the principal objects of conversation in their day was *improvement*. When Clarissa Harlowe harangued the wicked Lovelace she fired off volleys of moral maxims point blank at him, and had plenty to spare afterwards for her family as well. We cannot suppose that she meant purposely to be didactic; it was rather the spirit of the age in print, the spirit that pervaded the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth, from the time of Pope to Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen. It was as unfashionable then to be abrupt or blunt in speech as it was to be so in manner. A Chesterfieldian bow would go ill with "How d'ye do, old chap?"

and it would be equally impossible to combine "My dear sir—a thousand pardons—permit me to apologise!" when one hurried gentleman runs full tilt into another on his way to catch a train. Our grandmothers bestowed curtsies (how pretty the word is in its unabridged form *courtesy*!) upon their friends at meeting and parting, and we can imagine the high-flown compliments that pretty Phillis received from her gallant admirers during the walks in Kensington Gardens or the Mall, the which she reciprocated with blushes and a curtsy that exhibited her little sandalled feet and clocked stockings in the most correct "first position." Phillis liked to be told that she was "radiant as Diana," even if she did not know who the lady was, and that she was "sister to the Graces," and all the rest of it, and she liked the formal deferential bow of her "humble servant," with hat in one extended hand, and the other resting on his waistcoat somewhere in the region of his heart. These, and other such amenities of conversation were familiar to their mouths as household words to our ancestors, and constituted the acknowledged distinction between a gentleman and the "vulgar."

Conversation, as generally understood at present, consists, too often, of autobiography in instalments. One's acquaintances yearn to pour out their family history and their own to our unwilling ears, convinced that as nothing in the world is more interesting to themselves, it must therefore be equally so to their friends. This, by the way, was a vice not altogether unknown to our grand-parents, but was excusable in their days, inasmuch as their friends knew them and their private affairs intimately enough to make such gossip entertaining.

The Chesterfieldian conversations or Johnsonian dialogues might perhaps produce a somnolent effect on a modern and irreverent listener, but he could not fail to admire the rounded periods, or to be impressed by the portly doctor's dogmatic sententiousness. A man who could compile a dictionary should certainly have a great command of words, and it is on record that Boswell's hero used them with a long-winded verbosity that enchanted his admiring audience. We do not doubt that charming Mrs. Thrale sat and listened with rapt attention, while poor Mrs. Williams, in a quiet corner, looked fondly out at the ponderous, snuff-sprinkled speaker; Boswell, eager and alert, hung on his utterances, and Goldsmith would deferentially assent while he inwardly contradicted. The

very form of his speech commanded attention. It held his hearers as did the ancient mariner's glittering eye. "Sir," said Dr. Johnson—and you were transfixed, hypnotised, without hope of escape, and listened in spell-bound silence.

There were wits in those days, it must be remembered. Men who charmed by the polish and elegance with which they disposed of a reputation with an epigram, or a political crisis with a *bon mot* famous sayings which have survived the utterance; and there were women, too, who, fascinated alike by their grace of manner and brilliant repartee—happy mortals—nay, immortals!—never at a loss for words of wisdom or wit. What, for instance, in these degenerate days can match Tallyrand's and La Rochefoucauld's inimitable apothegms? "The English have fifty religions and only one sauce." "We have all of us sufficient fortitude to bear the misfortunes of others," and so forth. France was pre-eminent in the art of conversation a century or more ago, and it may be said without exaggeration of the salons of the day, where Mme. de Stäel, Mme. Récamier and others held their court, that to visit them was a liberal education. With most of these brilliant conversationalists we are fairly well acquainted through the medium of letters, biographies, memoirs, etc., but the wit of the great Ablé-diplomatist comes down to us through other channels than his own, for the *Memoirs* that he wrote have never yet been published; why, it is somewhat difficult to say.

If dulness is the only annihilator of literature, it should be equally true to say that it is an infallible extinguisher to conversation. The attic salt of wit is absolutely necessary to brighten and add a piquancy to the more solid materials of reason's feast. When the great doctor rolled forth his polysyllabic wisdom, a certain heavy pungency of humour occasionally displayed itself, as in the memorable diatribe against a woman lecturer—it reminded him of a dog walking on its hind legs; it was never done well, but the wonder was that it was done at all. Too much stress, indeed, can scarcely be laid upon the importance of wit as a desirable element conversationally; not necessarily that wit which is exercised at the expense of others, and which would sacrifice a bosom friend on the altar of repartee—but rather the spark which kindles an answering flash from others, and illuminates mediocrity as an incandescent burner brightens up a suburban back parlour. A past-master in this art

was the famous editor of the Edinburgh Review, Sydney Smith, whose brilliant table-talk has been handed down to us by numerous admirers. He was a universal favourite in society, where his epigrams were always received with delight, for although never censorious, he could on occasion be stinging, as in the case of his remark upon Hallam at table "with his mouth full of cabbage and contradiction." When we remember that the society of his day comprised the most brilliant conversationalists in the early part of the century, we can form some idea of the mental pabulum that formed the table-talk of the time, and of which we have delightful examples in Hazlitt, Lamb, Southey, and their contemporaries.

Do we ever hear of table-talk nowadays? Alas, no,—the art is lost. People meet to eat, not to converse, and a desultory dropping fire of remarks is all one meets with or expects. It is not good form to talk, a man or woman guilty of such a solecism, is looked upon as conceited or vulgar, and to be vulgar is a worse offence than to be wicked in society's eyes,—either they wish to show off their superior wit and wisdom, or they are ignorant of the rules of modern good breeding, which cultivates a solemn silence and spiritless indifference towards these things which furnished forth their grandparents' feasts of reason so richly with much kaleidoscopic talk. There is nothing new and there is nothing true, and what is the use of exciting oneself over such a played-out comedy as this life? The Epicurean motto "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you die," applied well enough to the old régime, for they did not disdain the quips and cranks, the pleasant jest, the hearty laugh that helped digestion and enlivened their more ponderous meetings, but we, their degenerate descendants!—well, mutes at a funeral could scarcely be more sad and subdued than many of the frequenters of modern society gatherings.

The one man who knew his kind thoroughly—Shakespeare—says, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," and in some respects, it would be infinitely better for us if we were all more alive to this truth. An actor must necessarily put some interest and sympathy into his work. When he speaks he makes us feel—unless, indeed, he is a mere mouthpiece—that he is the man he represents, and that his passions, sorrows, and joys are real. His art emphatically asserts that "feeling should descend from the mind to the heart, that which is *light* may become *heat*."

The best conversationalists, and the pleasantest companions are those men and women who, like good actors, are in quick and sympathetic touch with their company. From grave to gay, from lively to severe, they will range with you, playing many parts, and all well, so that afterwards one recalls their varied talk with unmixed pleasures,—unaware, probably, that the secret of this pleasant intercourse lay altogether in our companion's versatility and willingness to talk upon those subjects that pleased us rather than on those which commended themselves to him. Undoubtedly the secret of successful conversation depends on adaptability. Between persons of opposite and decided views it is rarely satisfactory, for there is always friction, and a real interchange of ideas is impossible. One becomes conscious of a gathering cloud, and the warm atmosphere of cordial confidence grows cold enough to wither in the bud any further expression of feeling on the unlucky subject.

After all, it is better to have a sturdy opinion on really important questions than a weakly inclination only that may be uprooted or disturbed by any sturdy opposing force. But such an opinion should never be allowed to intrude itself unpleasantly in our social relations. Putting aside the inevitable differences of opinion to which we expose ourselves, it is also in bad taste, for it is as true that speech is given to us to conceal our thoughts as that it is also the channel of revealing them. We may be sure—indeed we know—that the brilliant talkers whose glory has departed with them, were never guilty of such impropriety, always excepted the great doctor himself, whose dogmatisms were indulgently listened to by an audience who venerated rather than criticised. We can, indeed, imagine poor Goldsmith chafing sometimes, while his domineering friend laid down the law, but Johnson had been his benefactor, and the warm-hearted Irishman remembered and endured.

The distinction between conversation and talk is very obvious. The one allows each an innings and a fair field; the other is a desultory scramble over every conceivable topic, with an equal amount of attention bestowed on a bonnet as on a battle. The one is dignified, courteous, intellectual. The other, hasty, slipshod, and commonplace. Of course I am aware of the objections that may be made to a revival of the art of talking. Conditions of life are so changed that all our habits must accommodate themselves to the new order of things. Leisure is limited, and cannot be spent in the

cultivation of that beautiful Gladstonian attribute "verbosity." What we have to say must be said briefly and to the point,—and in so far as mere information is concerned, brevity is certainly the soul of wit,—also in the multiplicity of demands upon one's leisure, mere talking for the sake of conversation is a waste of time. So it may seem superficially, but to those who look beneath the surface it is not so. They see the sad and inevitable deterioration of language, the adoption of a maimed and unattractive form of speech, the glory of Elizabethan and Shakesperian English, fallen from its high estate and supplanted by vulgar slang and the bastard cosmopolitanisms that represent his native tongue to a modern Englishman. Who among us, taking thought in the matter, but would weep at the prospect of the language that Shakespeare immortalized, and Milton glorified, becoming as extinct as that of ancient Egypt? And yet we run this risk daily in neglecting to cultivate the graces and amenities of conversation—an art, it should be remembered, that demands all the resources of language for its proper employment—and on which are dependent as a natural corollary, the dignity and purity of our literature.

Yes, we have fallen into a parlous state indeed, if the pleasant and healthful habit of conversation is to degenerate into mere gossip or monosyllabic exchange of opinion. The grave-digger in "Hamlet" asserts that the English are all mad,—better mad than sad perhaps, for that is what we are come to. We still like to be amused, but we are incapable of amusing ourselves, the facilities offered of doing the business for us being so numerous and accessible. In some respects, too, we still like to talk, but our mental grasp of a subject is atrophied, all our information being provided for us in accurate cut and dried form by myriad newspapers and magazines, so that no thinking is necessary. Facts are very good servants, but they are domineering masters, and they effectually strangle conversational effort. When Smith meets Brown at lunch he may, for instance, wax eloquent on the Indian question, and if Brown meets him on the same ground a cheerful and friendly conversation may result. But Brown is primed with facts and figures fresh from his morning paper, and fires them off like the enemies' rifle bullets, straight at poor Smith's innocent little suppositions and opinions, till the latter collapses entirely in the face of such tremendous odds.

No, let all enthusiasts in the revival of the old-fashioned art of

pleasing speech zealously set their faces against facts as such, using them indeed, but sparsely, and covering their naked unattractiveness with such a skilfully woven veil of language, and hiding their obtrusive angles with such many coloured flowers of speech, that instead of terrifying they will charm us, and it may be, the day will once more dawn, when conversation will no more be looked upon as a forgotten art, but as a living and intellectual representation of a nation's language.

Damocles, or the Gates of Janus.

By THEODORA CORRIE.

Author of "IN SCORN OF CONSEQUENCE," "PETRONELLA DARCY,"
"ONLY THE AYAH," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIII. (*continued.*)

PATRICK came every day to see May, and Ted always appeared in his company. The two girls must go to this or that croquet party, or ride, or drive, on those excursions so dear to Evelyn's heart. Mrs. Godwin could seldom be persuaded to lend her presence to any form of entertainment in the daytime. During the last ten years, her natural indolence had gradually increased, till, as May prophesied, gaiety by daylight presented itself less as a pleasure than as a wearisome form of exertion. Evelyn was, however, always amiably willing to chaperone both girls; and what with riding, driving, croquet and millinery, the days went by all too quickly. Mrs. Godwin complained more than once, with some truth, that the whole routine of the household had to be changed to suit May's convenience.

Into all these gaieties, Paul refused to be drawn. Possessed by a writing fever, he spent most of his time shut up in the attic, or else went out in the early morning, in a light canoe on the river. Another month's work would see the completion of his first book. Ideas came to him best under the clear sky, and stamped themselves on his memory, to be written down afterwards as if from recollection. The

dipping skulls, the motion of the boat, the very reflections in the water chimed in with his thoughts, and he drank in impressions afresh at every bend of the river. Some people might have fancied that he was lost to his surroundings, but even when he was at work in the attic, the scent of the larches, through the open back window, floating up on the sunshine, the sound of the river across the grass, the call of the wild duck and moor-hens, the very fluttering of the wings of alighting swallows under the eaves, or their passing shadow on the blind; all these things came to him, and fashioned as in a golden mist his spirit's work-frame; in the midst of which his thoughts moved to and fro, weaving through a floating web the thread of inspiration.

Once admit the presence of other people, and dreams become impossible to some natures. So it was with Paul, and Henrietta realised this truth if no one else did. She always dusted the books and arranged the attic before he came into it in the morning. The room would have looked forlorn enough if she had not set it straight; while the fresh buttonhole always laid on his blotting book, furnished a greeting which he could ill have dispensed with.

The two generally sat silent while they were together; the girl contentedly curled up reading in the window seat, while her cousin performed the more mechanical portion of his work. Of his monthly articles for the French periodical she often made fair copy, but of the new play, now nearly completed, she had never read a line. When the manuscript was finished, he had promised to read it aloud to her. This promise, given three years ago, always stood in the girl's mind as the starting point to some unknown goal. She could never bring herself to look beyond it without raising the old haunting dread of a possible separation in the future.

After Mrs. Godwin's heated room, a magnetic quiet reigned in the whole atmosphere of the attic, which drew Henrietta to it, and laid a spell upon her sensitive and finely strung nature. The oaken doorway stood as the turnstile to the fairyland of her childhood—a fairyland of bookshelves, where lived the pictured green-robed Dryad beckoning her on to a world of quiet delight. The old asylum had never lost its charm, and she could always take refuge here from the babble of talk in the drawing-room, from Patrick Strafford's stream of jokes, and loud good-natured laughter.

May had climbed the stairs once, but declared the place to be a

great wilderness of a room, with books enough in it for a whole college, and sufficient litter to fill half a dozen wastepaper baskets. Paul felt as if a French fashion-plate had suddenly invaded his sanctum, and much to his secret relief, she never came again.

Where Henrietta was concerned, matters stood on a very different footing. Though she kept the attic in order, the papers on his table were never meddled with, and in her own person she might have sat for a model for Herrick's lines. A certain "wild civility" could have been traced in more than her "shoe-tie." Paul's chair would have lacked something if she had not found hanging from its carved back, the little old silk hood worn on her early garden expeditions, or the white silk handkerchief tied round her neck every morning by Sophie, which, more often than not, found its way first to Paul's table, and then to his pocket, en route for a fresh presentation to its owner. The girl never guessed that nowadays every minute of her presence was noted by her cousin in the same fashion as a miser counts a hoard which he sees steadily diminishing. All the joy and the pain in his life centred on the tap that came so unfailingly every afternoon on the door-panels. For the touch of those light fingers through the coming years, the listener knew only too well he might wait all in vain.

Meanwhile, Henrietta treated him exactly as she would have treated a very dear brother. The little Princess of old days still kept some of her imperious ways, and often ordered her former play-fellow out of doors, with a determination which refused to be baffled. "If you don't do anything else," she used to say, "go and play cricket:" and this injunction he generally obeyed, with surprising docility.

CHAPTER XIV.

As we have said once before, in former days John Godwin had been a keen cricketer. His enthusiasm now spent itself upon the promotion of the game among his poorer neighbours, or rather upon a continuance of their interest in it. In his father's lifetime a generous portion of an eight acre field had been turned into a cricket ground: and here, by permission, the villagers still came to regular practices. Prevented from ever holding a bat again by the loss of his right arm,

Godwin was still a capital left-handed bowler, and to the Godwinites he proved himself at times an excellent coach. On fine summer evenings the well rolled pitch furnished unfailing attraction to the village blacksmith, the carpenter, the farrier and such worthies: and to any of the young ploughmen who were not too tired after their day's work to put in an appearance.

On these occasions Bellissima often trotted into the field, impressed apparently with a desire to keep order, and old Jeremiah generally followed the dog.

In the cricket shed, his yarns, particularly the description of the battle in which the master lost his arm, and Garibaldi was unhorsed, always elicited a murmur of genuine approval.

On ordinary evenings Godwin left the players to themselves: but once a fortnight, a flag flying from an old staff, announced to the initiated that the Squire was in the field; and the men came up for what they called a "tussle practice": the said tussel being accompanied by unlimited cans of tea, and buns prepared by the village baker. Buns of a yellow brown colour, large, wonderfully puffy, dull surfaced and sticky: served in a clothes basket, covered and lined with a white tablecloth, to keep off intruding flies. No such buns are to be seen nowadays, any more than the almug trees, and spices of famous memory which came long ago to King Solomon.

The fortnightly practices all tended to one culminating point of interest; a yearly cricket match, always played between the Godwin's Rest and the Godwin's Chase villagers.

Out of consideration for the farmers, the match played in fine summer weather could only be a half-day affair, single innings a side. The men being allowed by special request to knock off work at mid-day, they were always in the field by one o'clock, and stumps were never drawn till half-past seven in the evening.

Excitement ran higher than the score, and by nightfall everyone could generally boast of an innings and an appetite.

From start to finish the match was regarded as a most delightful form of entertainment. The small boys came to watch their fathers, and went home to practice with stumps made out of willow wands, and balls of curious consistency: the wives, who could shut up their cottages, went to watch their husbands and sons. Altogether, as the old clerk used to remark: "He'd never seen anything to

ekal it, man and boy : nor the Squire's way of carving roast beef afterwards neither, God bless him ;" a sentiment heartily endorsed by Jeremiah.

Forty years ago, down in the country, the women all dropped curtseys, and the men wore smock frocks : and in some out-of-the-way parishes, the one radical member of the community found himself treated as a harmless lunatic, a fit subject for the village wit, or at any rate for amused commiseration. Modern civilisation which has cleared out so many dark corners, has nevertheless inevitably swept away on its tide a great deal of that poetry of life to which recollection still clings.

Looking from the past to the present state of the country parishes, one can trace so great an increase of morality and self-respect among one's poorer brethren, that carping criticism would be sorely out of place : yet, all the same, memory turns fondly to the old days when the haymakers worked on till midnight, as a matter of course, under the June stars ; holding a lantern if need be, to the gatepost while the great waggons passed through with their load : the men loth, one and all, to leave good grass for a chance of a change in the weather.

In those days, far from bringing their own food to the Rector's glebe land, or elsewhere, the farming hands were always fed by their employer. Where are the generous fruit tarts, made and sent out in milkpans ? the pails of savoury Irish stew, smoking hot, and thick with good vegetables : and the cans of home brewed ale that quenched thirst instead of provoking it ? Where is the universal smock frock lamented still by the old labourers, as the one garment that turned the wet, and kept a man's chest warm despite the dirtiest weather ? Where is the olden time great lady, the dear old Duchess, who manufactured with a dainty set of tools her own daintier shoes for the yearly county ball : who carved roast beef in a great holland apron at the dinners and suppers to the tenantry ; who always started the village dance on May day round her own time-honoured thorn tree in the home park : and regularly examined the children in her parish schools ?

All these things, and the people who made them have vanished during the march of the last forty years. The old order has changed, giving place to the new one : and though some of the matrons still drop a curtesy, in return for a handshake, without any thought of

servility, the younger generation, civil enough, will never learn to bow their knees. And the white smock, with its quaint old world needlework, can only be seen at funerals, on the pall bearers and at church afterwards for a Sunday or two. The last relic of ancient garments has taken sanctuary, like many better things before it ; but for how long this refuge will avail it is hard to say. In the meantime my digression has led me far enough away from my starting point—the annual cricket match at Godwin's Worthy.

With the goodwill of the reader, I will take up the thread of events, in company with Jeremiah, who, when the all important day came, declared that it could not have dawned more auspiciously.

"Round-away Hill," an eminence in the far distance, had been veiled in mist for some hours after sunrise ; and to the appearance of this stretch of down, culminating in a green barrow, Jeremiah always pinned his opinion of the weather. On uncertain days the hill always appeared to have made a march forwards, being clearly visible : but on fine settled mornings it was only hazily in sight, and looked as if it had beaten a retreat.

Jeremiah asserted that the place was well named, and that it had been called "Round-away Hill," because, as he informed the village youth, it was here that the ancient Britons had "runned away," when Oliver Cromwell beat William the Conqueror during the thirteenth century. This assertion made in perfect good faith, was never questioned by anyone. Jeremiah prided himself on being a bit of a historian, and a weather prophet into the bargain.

He was the only man in the village who had fought through a real battle, and had done some killing of foreigners and Frenchies on his own account. True, Ragget the village radical, who lived on a pension of his own, boasted of active participation in the battle of the Nile : but this piece of information never failed to produce a guffaw. It had long leaked out, that the sole position he had occupied during the engagement was that of stoker. Except as a butt, Ragget met with small attention : while on all important occasions Jeremiah and Wallis, the postman, divided the honours of the little community between them.

On this particular summer morning the two men had been busily working together, sticking miniature flags on the boundary, giving the roller one last pull, and helping the Squire and Henrietta with final arrangements. The ground was in excellent condition, the

tiny flags fluttered gaily in the breeze, and shortly before one o'clock the village appeared in the field : players and spectators alike determined to make the most of their time.

The interests of both sides were fairly represented by the members of the Godwin household, and by a large contingent from the Chase. Wet or fine, Evelyn drove over early : Ted, debarred from playing, always kept score ; while John performed the same office for Godwin's Rest. Evelyn and Henrietta kept a duplicate record ' just for the pleasure of it,' and were very seldom caught tripping. They took as much interest in the match as the players themselves did ; and great was the amicable rivalry displayed between the two households and their respective teams.

An old black shed put up long ago at the top of the field remained sacred to the players and some of their friends. A low wooden pavilion, a little to the right of it, served as a grand stand for the "Quality," so styled by Jeremiah : while the rest of the onlookers, the village youth and the smaller fry, disported themselves on the grass. On these days unlimited tea in large cans circulated from three o'clock, accompanied by the monster bun before mentioned : and the proceedings always terminated in a supper served in the Godwin's Rest coachhouse.

When living at the Chase with her brother (old John Godwin, then the young Lord of the Manor), the Duchess had shown a keen interest in many cricket matches : before people whispered, that Mr. Godwin had taken to his wilder ways, and had half broken her heart. Now perhaps from some lingering memory she still supported the old traditions : and though in visibly declining health, no one doubted that she would not fail to appear on the ground to witness the finish of the match. One particular seat in the old wooden pavilion being reserved for her special use.

When we said that the Godwin family was represented, we must make one exception to this statement. Mrs. Godwin seldom came to the field till late in the afternoon. She disliked the glare out of doors, and never could enter into the general excitement, or see the good of all the "fuss." On this particular day she stayed tranquilly in her room till three o'clock, when the door opened and May walked in.

"It's quite too hot for anything, mamma; they have been at it for two hours," she said. "Godwin's Rest won the toss and went in

first, and Patrick is standing mid-off. He won't be batting till tea time, if then : there is no good in my sitting out there to be grilled. Henrietta is a perfect Salamander : she is quite absorbed. I couldn't get her to move."

"Who is looking after her?"

"Cousin Evelyn, and Ted, and Miss Swann," said May, with a meaning smile. "Miss Swann has bought a piece of magenta worsted work, which makes one inclined to squint. Miss Lavender is too poorly to come. She is failing very fast, it seems to me. Miss Swann says that she has not the strength to walk round the garden this summer. Poor thing, she sent me a special message, and wants me to go to tea there to-morrow. It is rather a nuisance, but she seems to take it for granted that I am coming. You know I have put it off several times, and Cousin Evelyn was listening : and one must be polite : though it is rather a bore to have to be out on my last spare afternoon. I really have been meaning to visit Miss Lavender every day this last fortnight, but there has been so much to do. Miss Swann says that they have a little present for me. And while I think of it, mamma, I had something rather nice given me this afternoon by Aunt Catherine."

"Your aunt is not there already?" said her mother incredulously.

"She did not get out of the carriage : she came to pick up Miss Swann, mamma. She is going first of all to see Miss Lavender, and to have tea at the Nutshell."

The expression of astonishment on Mrs. Godwin's face deepened. "Fancy Miss Swann giving a tea-party."

"I think Aunt Catherine offered herself a week ago from what Miss Swann said, mamma."

Mrs. Godwin looked offended ; it had not occurred to her that her aunt would drive over before five o'clock : and it was not pleasant to find the Nutshell preferred to Godwin's Rest.

"Aunt Catherine's present is not a bad one," May went on : "It is a cheque for a thousand pounds. She told me not to thank her for it, as it was all that I should see of her money. That was so like Aunt Catherine ; but she was very nice about it all the same : much less sphinx-like than usual. She does look most dreadfully ill, mamma, not a bit fit to be driving about. The thousand will be very useful. I wish that I had had it before I went to get my trousseau. Anyway I can give you back that hundred pounds now. Oh, yes, I

thought of that directly," cutting short her mother's remonstrance. "You wouldn't see a penny of it if I were going to be a poor woman. But Patrick told me yesterday that his uncle will increase his income directly we are married, and I am to have two thousand a year for pin money. You know Sir Patrick is enormously rich. I mean to be properly presented next spring, and to have Henrietta up to stay with me. I shall be the best dressed woman in London," May ended, with a little emphatic nod of her yellow head. "Mamma," mischief deepening in her eyes, "do you know when the first man went in to-day what Ted nearly entered on the scoring sheet?"

"No, what, May?"

"Instead of Henry Elton he began putting down Henrietta, I was looking over him, but he didn't notice me. Patrick has found a new name for me lately. He calls me Mrs. Bryant and May's patent safety match maker. Its too bad of him: but somehow I can never see two people together without building castles. To go no farther than Uncle John, it always astonishes me that he can't persuade cousin Evelyn to marry him."

Her mother looked startled. "He has too much pride to be a mere suitor for money. There could be no love about it; Evelyn must know that."

"Why not?" said May, coldly. "I have always thought that there might be a good deal."

"You young people see the reflection of yourselves in everything," said Mrs. Godwin, "but I fancy your uncle was too much in love with Marguerite ever to care about anyone else."

"My cousin Marguerite," said May. "Let me see; she died before I was born. But seriously, mamma, was Uncle John ever really in love with her?"

"Your uncle was always at the Grange that summer," said Mrs. Godwin, "till the crash came, and then he seemed to lose his head altogether, after the night of that ball."

May settled herself comfortably, leaning her head back against the cushions of her mother's sofa. Her curiosity roused already by Henrietta's remark about the brier roses, could more probably be satisfied by her mother than by anyone else.

"Tell me all about it, mamma," she said, coaxingly; "I so seldom get you to myself for a good talk"

"Whose fault is that, May?" said Mrs. Godwin, in a voice, half-reproachful, half-caressing. "I hardly know what makes me think of the old time to-day. I never do when I can avoid it, the contrast is too sharp; still, the night that your great-aunt gave that ball is one not easily to be forgotten. Your grandfather complained of feeling poorly after dinner, and made a point of your uncle staying with him, which was very provoking. However, I found out afterwards that he was very much upset about some money matters; and he had a stroke that night from which he never really rallied, though he lingered a fortnight, and could never bear John out of his sight; and then nearly everything was sold, as you know, and we went abroad."

"But about Uncle John and my cousin," said May. It was almost impossible to start Mrs. Godwin on any subject, without her branching away from it.

"The night of the ball, May, just as I was starting, your uncle came to me with a note and a lovely bouquet of brier roses. He asked me to see that Marguerite had them, and to explain about your grandfather to Aunt Catherine. When I arrived, I found that Marguerite was not very well. She suffered from her heart, and she had an attack of palpitation, and was not allowed to come downstairs that evening. I asked for her, and they took me to her room, and that was the last I ever saw of her, poor child. She always looked such a baby, though she was just seventeen. It was very pretty to see her with the flowers; she seemed quite comfortable then, and no one felt alarmed about her. I could see that the note wouldn't be opened while I was there, so I went downstairs. After dinner I heard that Evelyn had accepted General Thorne. They were in the conservatory for ever so long together. Everyone was congratulating her, and I told John the news, when I got home, but he was too much taken up with your grandfather, who was much worse; and I had a miserable, gloomy time of it altogether. Within a few hours the news came that Marguerite had died from failure of the heart's action; died in her sleep, poor girl. It was all most depressing, as you can imagine, May. Your uncle shut up in your grandfather's room for a fortnight; and then the rush off abroad, while the agent arranged the sale for your uncle. He refused to stay a day in the place after the funeral. And your father was quite overwhelmed and gave in to everything. We were all hustled off before I had time to breathe. But I knew very well that John's

marriage with Claire de Follet was no love match. He has never cared for anyone but poor little Marguerite, and he never will; of that I am quite sure."

This conviction, a source in itself of infinite satisfaction and security, during the last twenty years, was one not likely to be abandoned. But May's words for the second time within a few weeks introduced a possible disarrangement of existing circumstances. Though heartily disliking Evelyn, Mrs. Godwin, in her secret heart, looked upon her as a "white witch," capable of throwing spells at will over most people.

"Uncle John is an enigma to me," said May. "Perhaps he has met with a rebuff. Cousin Evelyn looks very well able to look after herself. All the same it is a pity. If he would only migrate to the Chase, this place would make a very suitable dower house for you, with a suitable income to keep things going, if you really wished to remain here. Now don't begin to shake your head at me, mamma. It amuses me to make plans, and it doesn't hurt anybody."

May looked very pretty this afternoon. There was something about her that can only be described by the word vivid. She was fond of very bright colours, particularly of scarlet. In her red silk blouse, and coquettish straw hat, with a great bunch of poppies in it; and the same flowers patterned in wreaths on her white skirt, she looked like the herald of coming corn fields; while the fairness of her skin, and the masses of her yellow hair defied criticism. She sat still for a few minutes longer, meditatively swinging one foot to and fro, then said;

"Henrietta has promised to come for me when the other side go in; by that time the detachment from the Grange ought to be here. I know that M. de Brie is coming over; he has promised to bring Hetty a French book, and he wants to take a lesson in the mysteries of cricket. I like your cousin, mamma, he is a very handsome old man."

"He is not particularly old," said Mrs. Godwin, with a sudden access of irritation in her voice, for which she could not have given an account.

"Isn't he?" said May, carelessly. Her eyes were cast down, and her mother failed to perceive the expression that had suddenly come into them. "I don't know how old he may be, mamma, in reality, but he is one of those delightful people who never bore one. Henri-

etta and I both admire him immensely. He makes one think of the most interesting part of a novel—the last volume—and that reminds me that I am keeping you from finishing your book. I see you are in the third volume, so let me have the two first. I shall follow your good example and rest for an hour.” Getting up now, and kissing her mother lightly on either cheek, she strolled to the window, and sitting down in an armchair, became speedily buried in the joys and sorrows of an imaginary heroine.

Her mother heaved a sigh, that told of a good deal of mental perplexity. Her own mind, like her boudoir, was shaded off into artistically blended half tones, where no single colour, or motive could be detached from its surroundings.

I hoped that Aunt Catherine would have remembered May more substantially, she thought; however, the money will come in very usefully. There is no need to tell John that the trousseau has cost me nothing. He is stingy enough as it is, he has only offered to pay for the wedding dress. If Aunt Catherine had any proper feeling, she would have made him a proper allowance long ago. The duke left her very well off; she must be immensely rich, independently of the Godwin money. John wants help badly enough, to judge by the economy that he tries to make me practice. But men always exaggerate, and a few debts won't make any difference to him later on. With a prospective income of twenty-thousand a year, he could easily raise money if he could chose to do so; with which reflection, Mrs. Godwin returned to the perusal of her book.

She was always polite to her aunt; but the duchess had never liked this niece by marriage. A natural antagonism existed between them, veiled by the younger woman by motives of expediency, but plainly visible in the unvarying coldness of the other's manner.

On the afternoon of the cricket match Mrs. Godwin's third volume of a novel proved unusually interesting. Four o'clock had struck before Henrietta re-appeared, the colour coming and going in her cheeks, and her dark eyes sparkling with excitement.

“Our side are all out,” she announced. “Oh, mamma, you should have been there. Paul has played splendidly: he made thirty runs, just half the score, and carried his bat: and the Chasites will do well if they tie us before the stumps are drawn. Only Captain Strafford is dreadfully active. He had Paul out with a left-handed catch at the boundary. Uncle John says that he has

never seen anything prettier since Currie's catch at Lord's years ago. All the same it is detestable. I feel as if you had imported a cask of dynamite amongst us, May. He ought to be labelled dangerous."

Mrs. Godwin looked up from the interrupted reading to the girl's merry face.

"My dear, you seem quite excited."

"I am excited," said Henrietta gleefully. "And I expect to feel even more so by the end of the day. It is delightful to see Uncle John; I often wish we could do more in the village. He is my beau ideal of a squire: only he reminds me of Pegasus in pound, now-a-days," she added half to herself.

"Excitement is very becoming," said May critically, "but you had better try to calm down, my dear child, or you will be quite used up before the match is over. Tell me, shall I wear this hat, or my scarlet silk Tam; I can't quite make up my mind?"

"The hat is very pretty, May, and it is the shadiest."

"Yes, I know that, but I think the Tam is more becoming than the hat. I could use my red parasol too, and it casts such a delightful coppery glow on the face of anyone who happens to be sitting next one. Lady Marianne St. John is coming over this afternoon, and I don't like her. Yes, I think I shall wear my Tam, but I want you to keep just as you are, Rietta."

"I did think of wearing my other hat," said Henrietta reflectively. "This is only my gardening one: but it is as good as a parasol, so nice and big and shady, and so convenient for scoring in."

"You couldn't have anything prettier, don't change it," said May decidedly. The hat in question, a limp white straw, of that kind which can be bought for a shilling, might not have suited anybody: but it lay on Henrietta's hair like a delicately curled leaf, and no better frame could have been found for the face that looked like a flower beneath it. Mrs. Godwin saw the girls off, and then returned to her book and her afternoon sleep.

The shadows were lengthening—she had forgotten all about the match, when hasty footsteps were heard outside, and Henrietta came running in, eagerness in every line of her face.

"Oh, mamma," she cried, out of breath, but radiant, "you must come out, I wouldn't have you miss the finish for anything. The

Chasites have put up forty-five. It is past seven o'clock: the light isn't very good, and they have just twenty minutes left to make fifteen runs. Captain Strafford is out, which is a comfort, and Dover and Greg are batting: but they are both dreadfully good: and there is one other man left to go in, one of the grooms. Mamma, we haven't had such a match for years."

Fortunately Mrs. Godwin had just finished her book: and as Henrietta stood by the sofa, her fair face lit up with excitement, there was something infectious in her manner, in the sweet eagerness that had made her leave the field to fetch her mother, without whom even this day's pleasure could not be perfect. With more alacrity than she usually displayed Mrs. Godwin rose to accompany her daughter. The visitors from the Grange had arrived some time ago, and it is always pleasant to find that one has been missed. She would probably sit looking in any direction but the crease, though if the rest of the world chose to honour the match she did not intend to be absent. The pavillion was well filled, but a chair had been carefully kept for her in a comfortable corner: and her own late arrival created a stir of some importance, so she flattered herself. The Duchess had come back from the Nutshell, bringing Miss Swann, and had been joined by Marianne, M. de Brie, and the other men who were staying at the Grange.

M. Réport seemed inclined to haunt Henrietta, and his example was so well followed that the girl in desperation begged to be left in peace, as she could not keep score and talk at the same time. Wrapped up in the game, she gave only a divided attention to other matters: while May, in her scarlet cap and blouse, had a word and a smile for everybody, and formed a little centre of counter attraction. Brought to the ground much against his will, the Duke leant over the back of his sister's chair, vainly endeavouring to make her talk: his well meant efforts only met with a request for silence.

"One might imagine that the fate of the nation hung on this particular match," he grumbled. "Cricket isn't a lady's game, and what's the use of your keeping score, Evelyn? John and Ted can be trusted to do that, and two of the men are at it as well."

"If you can't feel an interest at this juncture, I wish you would feign one," said Evelyn impatiently. "There! I thought as much: that drive of Dover's is good for four. We have just ten minutes left, and only one man to go in: Here, Sol, take my pencil. I suppose

you are capable of scoring one run, if we can only get it : but I can't sit still any longer."

He took her chair with a smile, and surveyed the scene before him with more interest than he had so far displayed. He was no cricketer, but the whole field at the minute furnished him with a study which lingered long in his memory. The most ignorant eyes might have discerned by this time, that a crisis in the day's interest was rapidly approaching. Even Jeremiah's tame jackdaw, perched at a safe distance from juvenile villagers on the top of the roller, held its head on one side with a knowing air: and Bellissima, crouched at Henrietta's feet, watched Paul's bowling with eyes that were almost human in their intelligence. The old umpire, standing in an ancient tall hat, brushed shiny and threadbare, and a frock coat buttoned to bursting, remarked audibly that it was the most rousing kind of a game that had been played on the ground for twenty years. He didn't know if he'd ever seen such another since he'd first been "empire." It was as pretty a team as he had ever set eyes on; a very pretty team, only the Chase looked terrible like winning.

Certainly the Chase did look very like winning. The two men who were in, were the flower of the eleven, Captain Strafford excepted. Everyone owned that 'Patty' had done wonders, and had stood up to Paul's bowling in a manner that elicited approving nods from friends, and foes alike: for the villagers were fair minded, and Paul was acknowledged to be the best cricketer in the neighbourhood.

The village blacksmith, now at the wicket (once a young Hercules, but at the present time an elderly one, fast growing grey and stout) possessed arms of iron, it is true: and his score generally mounted up by twos and threes so long as he stayed in: but he never could learn the meaning of the word caution, and was given to swiping. Fortune often favoured him, though he went by the nick name of L. B. W., and was always given out for this offence. Possibly on this memorable occasion the man opposite him was the most reliable player in the whole field—the manager of Evelyn's home farm—a little wiry hay-coloured man, with a hay-coloured crop of scanty hair, and tiny blue twinkling eyes—a man all but stone deaf, but with an air of alertness only to be matched by the general wiriness of a little fox terrier, which had come to the field with the team, and now sat with both ears cocked, waiting for the

only really interesting part of the day in its own estimation—the return of its master to the cricket shed. If Greg made a good score the dog by some intuition would run barking to meet him: but if he came back disconsolate Jock stayed in the shed to lick the hand that held the bat.

The display of cotton, and bandana handkerchiefs, now busily mopping many a heated brow, could hardly have been bettered in the United Kingdom, and the quantity of ginger-beer, and tea and buns already consumed was as Jeremiah said ‘mazerling.’ The youngest groom from the Chase, sat in the cricked shed, watching the course of events with bated breath. He was nervous: he had never played in the annual match before, and he hoped it would be won without his being called upon to bat. His hopes so far seemed to be in a fair way towards justification.

Dover, the smith, had his eye all there, as one man remarked. Alfie White (the son of the village baker and plumber), an urchin of some ten years of age, and an ardent Godwinite, gave his small body an anguished wriggle at this assertion, and relieved his feelings by standing head downwards, for the nineteenth time that day.

“’Tother chap don’t look likely,” said the village carpenter, “but he’s a good one to go, is little Greg. No more colour about him than an old paling, but he sticks to his wicket: he supplies the glue, he does. He’ll stay in so long as his breath lasts.”

This was true: Greg suffered badly sometimes from his heart, but he never could resist the subtle fascination of a match; and Mrs. Greg generally looked on with a divided mind; terror of possible consequences, and wifely pride and admiration, alternately weighing down the scale of her feelings. “Crickets” was all very well, but they would be the death of him some day, she knew that: and that little ‘op to leg, which Greg delighted to hit for four, was as good as a nail in his coffin. She only hoped Providence wouldn’t let her live to see him carried off the ground: but she couldn’t keep away, “not if it were ever so.” When the score mounted to fifty-nine the good woman felt with Lady Evelyn that she could sit still no longer. John and Henrietta sharing the same bench, sat with eyes glued to the bowler.

“I wouldn’t answer for their chances even yet,” said John under his breath.

Henrietta caught the whisper and squeezed the hand that lay near

her own. "Paul means to get his wicket without giving him a chance at a loose ball," she said with conviction.

If Paul meant mischief Dover was on his guard. The deliberation of his play had something maddening in it, to the uninitiated. From time immemorial when opportunity served he had always walked round his wicket and carefully scanned the pitch, "squinting" between the bails, first with one eye, then with the other: hitting the block hole on his return with a meditative slowness only atoned for by the vigour with which a drive for the boundary sometimes followed these proceedings.

Why did he walk round the wicket? Because he always had, and always should, and if he didn't he shouldn't hit a ball, he knew that: and there wasn't no rule against it, or he'd have batted his last long ago, and his youngest boy there took after him.

At twenty-five minutes past seven the score still stood at fifty-nine, and then a yell arose from the whole field. Dover was out, leg before wicket.

"I know'd it. Oh yes, I know'd it," he said on reaching the shed, stretching out his legs with a jerk: "Its awkwardish, but Joe there, is good for one run I suppose?"

"Nothing of the sort," said the Captain excitedly—a little dark man, with gipsy blood in his veins, and as keen a cricketer as one could find anywhere, if he had only had more practice—"nothing of the sort. See here, Joe, you go in, and just you don't do nothing at all. You leave Greg to hit: none of your fancy strokes, mind. Just you block. Mr. Paul's dead on the wicket. Don't you go thinking you can hit, Get along sharp, and stand straight when you get there."

The shadows were lengthening, the light growing more uncertain at every minute, when Joe marched nervously from the cricket shed. The terrier watching him go, suddenly lifted its head and howled. The sound was taken as a bad omen by the lookers on. "Keep that dog quiet, can't you," said one of the men. "I feel him all down my legs, and Joe there looks skimpy enough as it is."

Poor Joe, in Hampshire parlance, he certainly did look skimpy. Scarcely more than a boy in years, and a capital field, he had done good service earlier in the day: but his batting was always uncertain. Like the shyest horse in the Chase stables, he possessed nerves, and as he walked from the shed he could see nothing. He

had received much good advice, and had every wish to obey it to the letter. No Curtius before the gulf, or Horatius on the bridge, ever felt animated by greater desperation, or a stronger desire for glory: but, alas for Joe! the little imp of nervousness had settled on his shoulder. The handle of the bat felt red hot in his fingers, and he grasped it as a drowning man grasps a plank. Oh, why hadn't he gone in earlier in the game, why had he begged the umpire to get the Captain to put him in amongst the tail? However, he was there, and must abide the consequences, and Ted's cheery "keep up heart, Joe," as he passed the pavillion, still lingered in his ears like a note of encouragement.

The first ball he blocked. The first ball, gentle reader, is always the worst to a nervous cricketer. The second he treated in similar fashion, and the third travelled a short distance without bringing him to grief. Finding himself still in, at the final ball for the first over, Joe drew a long breath of relief and straightened his back: and then, he never quite knew how it happened, but the ball bowled by Paul flew from the off side of the bat, into the claw like hands of short slip, and Godwin's Rest had won the match by one run.

There may be some consolation in the fact that the anguish of one person is often the joy of another: but at this particular moment Joe was beyond consolation. Amid the cheers of the other side, he walked back to the shed, and with his head hanging, listened to the delightfully candid remarks of his juniors (why are juniors always so pitiless, I wonder), inwardly debating whether or no he should resign his situation: feeling that he should never recover from the disgrace of this defeat. And while he sat thus, Alf White was experiencing the most glorious moment of happiness which had so far visited his short life: while for the twentieth time on this ever memorable occasion, his agility, undisturbed by a generous half dozen of sticky buns, he stood upon his curly head, and brought his heels together with a "clack" that said more plainly than words "Victory!" Was he not the baker's son, and had not his father caught out the last man?

The match was over, the party broke up, the visitors streamed down the meadow towards the coach-house, the stable help feeling a little less like suicide; for Ted, guessing the state of the case, good-naturedly spoke a word of comfort *en passant*, complimenting the lad on the score of his excellent fielding earlier in the day, and

declaring Paul's bowling to be of a kind before which any man might succumb : winding up by prophesying better luck next year. If the gentleman could speak to him like that, and if there was a chance of his being numbered among the eleven next year : why well, then Joe began to think that life might be more bearable on the whole : and that perhaps he might eat his share of roast beef without choking over it.

The preparations for supper were going forward, as John with his aunt on his arm walked slowly to the entrance gate, and for some minutes stood talking, after putting her into the victoria, while the Curate performed the same office for Lady Evelyn.

"It's no good," said the Duchess, glancing in the direction of the other carriage: "he will get preferment before long, and a good piece of preferment too, he deserves it, but even a fat living will not bring him what he most wants."

"They say that everything comes to him who waits, Aunt Catherine."

"If that is the principle you go upon, I call it a very mistaken one, John. Mahomet went to the mountain, if you remember."

"Unluckily I am not Mahomet," he said in an imperturbable voice.

Then the expression of his face changed to one of sudden concern. He leant forward, and laying his hand on her arm, said gently: "This has been a fatiguing day, you are looking very tired; do you think Cleveland quite understands you?"

"I understand myself," was the answer, "so does Cleveland too, for that matter. No you can't get me anything, I shall be better in a minute or two. I am not going to faint." But John had taken the law into his own hands by this time and was holding brandy and water from his pocket flask to her lips, making of his figure an effectual screen so far as other eyes were concerned.

"You ought not to be out," he said presently, when the pinched drawn look passed from her face, and her breathing became more natural.

"It makes very little difference," she said, "I dislike being in bed, I shall never stay there till I come to the end of it all. My health is an old story by this time. There was something else I wanted to say to you. Have you or Laura retained any shares in that 'Silver Streak' mining company?"

"The dividends are high, but too risky for me," he said "I sold out last month; Laura won't be persuaded; I have said all that I can to her."

"Is Laura as economically inclined as ever, John?"

She spoke in an undertone, and he answered her with a scarcely perceptible bend of the head. Several people were passing the carriage at this minute: Ted at Henrietta's side, and Patrick following with May. They were escorting the girls as far as the garden, and would then return for the dinner, always rather a tremendous business. The Duchess looked meditatively after the retreating figures.

(To be continued.)

The Origin of Servants' Liveries.

By A. J. GORDON.

So far as the present writer is aware, the earliest mention of "liveries" made in history is in the reign of King Pepin of France. This king flourished about the year 750 A.D., and because of his diminutive size, he had bestowed upon him the rather disrespectful appellation of "Pepin the Short."

It would appear that certain of the French courtiers were so ill-mannered, as well as as ill-advised, as to make the monarch's deficiency in inches the subject of ill-natured ridicule. This unbecoming conduct having become known to the King, His Majesty resolved to put an end to such derision of his person by performing some feat which would prove, once and for all, that if deficient in stature, he was not so in manliness. In pursuance of this design, therefore, on the occasion of a public combat between a lion and a bull, when the former animal had succeeded, after a terrible struggle, in pulling the bull to the ground, King Pepin, turning towards those of his nobility who were present, said:

"Which one of you will dare to enter the arena now, and part the combatants, or kill them?"

A dead silence and very perturbed looks were the only reply.

"Then here is the man who will dare it," shouted the little King, springing, as he spoke, into the arena.

With drawn blade he rushed upon the lion and stabbed the fierce brute to the heart, ere it could withdraw its fangs from the neck of the bull in which they were imbedded. Then with one mighty stroke the intrepid monarch almost severed the bull's head from its body. The whole vast audience sat silent and amazed at so unlooked for an exhibition of courage, dexterity and strength combined.

Turning towards his courtiers, the King merely said, in a very quiet tone:

"You should have remembered, that although David was little of stature, yet he laid low the insolent giant who defied Israel."

A less dangerous form of amusement to which King Pepin was partial, was what were termed "*cours plénieres*." These were assemblies at which, upon the King's invitation, all the lords and courtiers of France were expected to be present. They were held twice in each year—at Christmas and Easter—and generally lasted for about a week at each time. Sometimes these gatherings took place at the King's palace; sometimes in the neighbourhood of one of the larger French cities, and sometimes in some rural district.

In the last named case, care was taken to fix the place of meeting within reasonable distance of one or other of the larger towns, so that those attending the assemblies might find in these towns the needful accommodation for themselves and their attendants. The proceedings always opened with a solemn celebration of the Mass, and ere the service began, the officiating priest was wont, solemnly, to place the Royal crown upon the King's head.

While the festival lasted, the King took all his meals in public: bishops and dukes alone being privileged to sit at the Royal table. A second table was provided for abbots, counts, and other leading men, and at both tables there was shown more profusion than delicacy, both in the quality of the meats and drinks, and the manner in which they were served. Flutes, hautboys, and other musical instruments were played before the bearers of each course, as it was removed from the tables. When dessert was served, twenty heralds, each holding aloft a jewelled goblet, shouted, thrice: "*Largesse! largesse* from the most potent of kings!" As they shouted, they scattered among the crowd handfuls of gold and silver coins. Then the

trumpets were blown, while the better-class spectators shouted, and the meaner sort scrambled, and often fought vigorously for the money scattered by the heralds.

Stage-plays, pantomimes, rope-dancing, and the performances of professional buffoons and jugglers constituted the subsequent diversions. Trained dogs, bears and monkeys were also exhibited, and put through their various performances, the whole of these costly shows being provided at the expense of the King. The height of magnificence and extravagance in the matter of these exhibitions was reached in the reign of Charles the Great, when nobles from all parts of the kingdom attended; many of them rivalling the monarch himself in the prodigality of their expenditure.

Charles VII. of France put a final stop to the *cours plénieres*, alleging that the expense attendant upon his wars with England made it impossible for him to continue them. One of the severest causes of expense, it was explained, arose from the fact that, beginning in King Pepin's time, etiquette and custom alike demanded that the King should, upon these occasions, give an entire suit of new and gorgeous clothing, not only to his own servants and retainers, but also to those of the Queen and all the princes of the blood royal. These garments were said to be "*livres*," that is, "delivered" at the King's expense; and from this word the English word "livery" was derived, as was the custom of providing servants with "livery," from the above-mentioned practice of certain of the French Kings.

A Modern Beverage.

"WHEN all things were made," says Salvation Yeo, in Kingsley's immortal "Westward Ho!" "none was made better than this." Unflinching adherence to the tenet of veracious record, compels us to admit that the penegyric was originally penned in praise of tobacco.

The subject of our approval, however, is of a somewhat divergent character, and although of equally universal employment, is, by virtue of its greater value, used with more care. We refer to that cordial of cordials—whisky; and the sentence is incomplete without the additional qualification—Pattisons'.

There are so many kinds, brands and makes of whisky upon the market, that the conscientious recommendation of the especial form of the delicious distillation entails a degree of responsibility, which the *connoisseur* is naturally unwilling to assume. During the last few years, distilling has assumed the important proportions of a fine art, ministered to by all the devices suggested by Science, Invention and general Enterprise.

Perhaps in no single instance is this advancement more marked than in the high-class productions emanating from the well-known firm of Pattisons, Limited, whose Scotch whiskies are sufficiently well known to require no comment here. Suffice it to say that they are admirable in every essential, as they are free from those objectionable qualities which characterize so many other makes before the public.

Men have long ceased to theorise and debate the question of benefit derived from drinking, at regular intervals, small draughts of the spirit in its pure state. There can be no doubt that, employed as a sedative and gentle invigorant, whisky is practically unequalled. Of course a cheap or indifferent preparation is calculated to be as baleful in action as the best is beneficial. There are several very excellent brands in vogue at the moment, all enjoying equal reputation for general excellence, but in common justice it must be said that Pattisons' Scotch whiskies are as near perfection as possible: having a rich, ripe flavour and delicate mellowness peculiarly their own.

Good whisky is to all intents and purposes a very valuable medicine. Its soothing action upon the nerves is well known, and in cases of severe cold, it forms an admirable embrocation if applied judiciously to the throat and chest; though to be sure, a facetious Irishman pointed out that its employment in this connection was somewhat hazardous, by reason of its unavoidable propinquity to the mouth. Pattisons' whisky possesses an undeniable, if indefinable charm. There is a sense of exhilaration in every dram: an exaltation which, in keeping with the refined quality of the spirit, is moderate, mellow and mellifluous.

Whisky is certainly fattening, and numerous instances are recorded in which the spirit has been directly instrumental in producing flesh and weight. The name is originally derived from the Gaelic *uisge*, water; *uisge beath*, modified into *usquebaugh*, or "water of life." A quarter of a century ago, the Scotch preparation was little known in England, but the high standard of merit attained by such firms as Messrs. Pattisons, Limited, has obtained for the spirit manufactured by our neighbours across the heather border, a reputation second to none in the world.

In conclusion it should be added, that whisky is unquestionably the most soothing spirit extant, and it is quite free from those noxious results which attend the consumption of brandy.

It may indeed be questioned whether Kingsley, when he recorded his memorable opinion of tobacco, had not rather Pattisons' whisky in his mind's eye, for it is indeed "a hungry man's food, a sad man's cordial, a wakeful man's sleep, and a chilly man's fire; there is nothing like it under the canopy of Heaven."
